

TOMBS AND FOOTPRINTS: ISLAMIC SHRINES AND PILGRIMAGES
IN ^vIRAN AND AFGHANISTAN
modern

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abstract:-

The thesis examines the characteristic features of Islamic shrines and pilgrimages in Iran and Afghanistan, in doing so illustrating one aspect of the immense diversity of belief and practice to be found in the Islamic world. The origins of the shrine cults are outlined, the similarities between traditional Muslim and Christian attitudes to shrines are emphasized and the functions of the shrine and the mosque are contrasted. Iranian and Afghan shrines are classified, firstly in terms of the objects which form their principal attractions and the saints associated with them, and secondly in terms of the distances over which they attract pilgrims. The administration and endowments of shrines are described and the relationship between shrines and secular authorities analysed. Attention is drawn in particular to the lavish patronage of shrines by the Safavid Shahs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The question which categories of people are most likely to visit shrines is raised; shrines are seen to play an especially prominent part in women's religious lives. The organisation and ritual of pilgrimage are described as far as the sources permit, as are the rituals which take place at the shrines themselves. In particular, the ritual of 'raising the standard', which is performed at or soon after New Year's Day at a number of shrines in northern Afghanistan and is believed to help to assure the prosperity of the community as well as the individual, is examined in some detail. People's motives for visiting shrines, economic, political, medical and social as well as strictly religious, are explored.

Finally a wider question is raised, how the diversity of Islamic belief and practice of which these shrine and pilgrimage cults provide such striking evidence may best be accommodated within an analytical framework. Some criticisms are made of the models of Islam put forward by Spooner, Gulick, Gellner and Eickelmann, and an alternative approach is outlined.

Transcription:-

Persian and Arabic terms used in the text have been underlined and transcribed using the system set out below. The only exception is the word murābit which, following Evans-Pritchard (1949), Bryan Turner (1974), Eickelmann (1981) et al., I have transcribed as marabout. The system follows that used by the Library of Congress (Cataloging Section, Bulletin 119/Fall 1976) save that for convenience the Arabic letter zad has been transcribed as z rather than z. Following Morton (1974, 1975) and Fischer (1980) among others, I have omitted the final he havaz from such words as khāna and imām-zāda. In order to indicate the combination of letters alef vav, as in khāja, the sign ~ has been placed above the alef. Both the glottal stops, the ain and the hamza, are simply represented by an apostrophe.

letters of the Arabic alphabet/transcription:-

alef	ا	none	sad	ص	s
be	ب	b	zad	ض	z
pe	پ	p	ta	ط	t
te	ت	t	za	ظ	z
se	ث	s	ain	ع	'
jim	ج	j	ghein	غ	gh
chim	چ	ch	fe	ف	f
he hotti	ح	h	qaf	ق	q
xe	خ	kh	kaf	ك	k
dal	د	d	gaf	گ	g
zal	ذ	z	lam	ل	l
re	ر	r	mim	م	m
ze	ز	z	nun	ن	n
zhe	ژ	zh	vav	و	v
sin	س	s	he havaz	ه	h
shin	ش	sh	ye	ی	y (but see vowels below)

vowels and diphthongs:-

_____ / _____ i	ی _____ / _____ ī	و _____ / _____ ū
_____ / _____ a	آ / ا _____ / _____ ā	ئی _____ / _____ ay
_____ / _____ u	ی _____ / _____ á	ؤ _____ / _____ aw

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Introduction

The subject of pilgrimage in particular is one which has only begun to attract the attention of social anthropologists within the last ten or fifteen years. Even the second edition of Lessa and Vogt's introductory selection of readings on religion (1965), for example, has no section on pilgrimages or shrines though it covers such diverse topics as mana and taboo, totemism, magic, witchcraft and divination, death, ghosts and ancestor worship. This may be partly because pilgrimages tend to be a feature of more complex societies, and it was not until some years after the Second World War that social anthropologists began to work in these societies. The growing interest in the post-war period among British social anthropologists in 'culture' or 'symbolism' and the move away from the structural-functional emphasis on kinship, marriage, property and government (Murdock 1951: 467) doubtless played a part too. There may even be something in Victor Turner's suggestion that pilgrimage has merely shared in a general disregard of "the liminal and marginal phenomena of social process and cultural dynamics by those intent ... upon the description and classification of orderly institutionalised 'facts'" (1978:1).

Fortunately, pilgrimage has now become a respectable subject, thanks to such pioneering studies as Christian's (1972) examination of changes in Catholic pilgrimage in a valley in northern Spain, and Bhardwaj's (1973) work on Hindu pilgrimage in northern India. The

series of papers by Victor Turner (1973, 1974a, 1974b, 1975) which culminated in his and Edith Turner's volume Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture (1978) has greatly stimulated interest in the subject. Werbner's introduction to the A.S.A. collection Regional Cults (1977), for example, takes up some of Victor Turner's themes in a largely African context. Subsequently Pfaffenberger (1979) and Sallnow (1981) have tested in Sri Lankan and Peruvian contexts respectively Turner's hypothesis that pilgrimage is characterised by the experience of *communitas*. It should also be pointed out that British historians have recently been turning their attention to pilgrimage. Here Sumption's (1975) largely descriptive study of pilgrimage in medieval Europe and Finucane's (1977) more sociological work on a group of English shrines whose popular cults emerged between 1066 and 1300, as well as Peter Brown's (1981) analysis of the cult of saints in late antiquity, are worth noting.

However, in spite of the growing interest in pilgrimage and shrine cults, there has as yet been little detailed study of these phenomena in the Islamic world. While a number of authors have described the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, a duty incumbent upon every Muslim at least once in a lifetime (e.g. Burton 1855, Rutter 1928, Cobbold 1934, Kamal 1964), there has as yet been no proper sociological account of the hajj and its organisation. Nor has there been any systematic description and analysis of the numerous lesser Muslim pilgrimages which range from visits to local village shrines to fully-fledged pilgrimages to major shrines whose

catchment areas extend across national boundaries. Even the surveys of middle eastern anthropology by Gulick (1976) and Eickelmann (1981), though they mention shrines, hardly acknowledge the existence of these pilgrimages.

In the first place therefore, I aim in this thesis to identify and describe the characteristic features of Islamic shrines and pilgrimages in Iran and Afghanistan. This means that I shall be exploring one aspect of the immense diversity of belief and practice to be found in the Islamic world. In the second place I shall be discussing the general problem of how this diversity may best be accommodated within some kind of analytical framework. In particular, a commentary upon the utility of the analytical distinction between mosque and shrine, suggested by Spooner (1971) among others, forms a counterpoint to the discussions of particular aspects of shrines and pilgrimages.

In the first chapter I examine the origins of the shrine cults in the Islamic world, as well as comparing the Christian saint and the Muslim holy man and contrasting the functions of mosques and shrines. I continue in the second chapter by classifying Islamic shrines in Iran and Afghanistan in terms both of the objects which form their principal attractions and the saints associated with them. I also rank them according to the distances over which they draw pilgrims. In the third chapter I discuss aspects of the relationship between secular rulers and shrines, look at the way

shrines are administered and describe some of their other attractions. In chapter four I ask whether any particular categories of people visit shrines more regularly and more frequently than others, as well as examining, as far as the sources permit, the question of how pilgrimage is organised, and exploring some aspects of pilgrimage ritual. In chapter five I discuss the communal and individual ritual which takes place at the shrines themselves. In chapter six I explore the question why people visit shrines, asking in particular whether this-worldly or other-worldly motives predominate, as well as drawing attention to some of the political and economic aspects of visiting shrines. Finally, in chapter seven I discuss the wider problem of how best to handle the diversity of Islamic belief and practice of which these shrine and pilgrimage cults provide such striking evidence.

As far as concerns the question of definition, a shrine may be described uncontroversially as "a place where worship is offered or devotions are paid to a saint or deity" (S.O.E.D.). Pilgrimage is not quite so simply defined; sometimes the word is used to describe any visit to a sacred place, near or far, other than one's regular place of worship. However, the distinctive feature of a pilgrimage is usually taken to be the fact that it involves a journey. It should therefore be distinguished from a simple visit to a local shrine, though there is bound to be something arbitrary about where the line between the two is drawn. In addition, pilgrimage tends to be a voluntary act, which distinguishes it from prescribed worship in a local church, mosque or temple (see

e.g. V & E. Turner 1978:7-10). Hence the definition of pilgrimage I use here is "a journey, usually voluntary, to a sacred place primarily for some religious purpose". This definition is sufficiently flexible to be applied cross-culturally, leaving the question of the meaning of the religious journey to be ascertained in the context of the particular religious tradition in which it is located.

I have made Islamic shrines and pilgrimages in Iran and Afghanistan the focus of the thesis both because I have some first hand experience of each country, and because, though neighbours, their sectarian composition is quite different¹. Iran has a majority of Twelver Shi'ites with a large minority of Sunnis and a small minority of Ismailis, while in Afghanistan the proportion of Sunnis and Twelver Shi'ites is reversed. The latter form a fairly substantial minority, and again there is a small minority of Ismailis (from now on I refer to Twelver Shi'ites simply as Shi'ites and Sevener Shi'ites as Ismailis). This enables me to compare and contrast Sunni, Shi'ite and Ismaili attitudes to shrines and pilgrimage.

(footnote¹: Having visited Iran in 1976, in 1978 I began field research on the subject of inter-ethnic relationships in the area around the small town of Nahrin in northern Afghanistan. The deteriorating political situation meant that I had to abandon fieldwork after spending only a few months in the field.)

Since fieldwork is at present out of the question in both countries, I have relied almost entirely on what secondary sources are available, and used a few details from my own field research in Afghanistan. Apart from an extremely detailed but almost entirely descriptive study of saint worship and pilgrimage in the Kabul area by Harald Einzmann (1977), and papers on aspects of shrine and pilgrimage cults by Bazin (1973), L. Dupree (1976), Betteridge (1981) and Brooks (1981), I have used ethnographic accounts which deal with these topics inter alia such as B.A. Donaldson (1938), Massé (1938), Alberts (1963), L. Dupree (1970), Fischer (1973), Canfield (1973), Poulton (1973), Thaïss (1973) and R. and M. Poulton (1979). I have also made use of two papers by Spooner (1963) and (1971) which describe popular religion in Iran and contain useful data on shrines.

Otherwise I have drawn on historical and political studies such as Avery (1965), Poullada (1973), L. Dupree (1973), Kakar (1979) and Fischer (1980), as well as the work of art historians, in particular Morton (1974, 1975), and scholars of Islam, such as D.M. Donaldson (1933), Von Grunebaum (1951), Goldziher (1971), Trimingham (1971), Hodgson (1974), Schimmel (1975), Said Amir Arjomand (1979) and Utas (1980), travellers accounts such as Ferrier (1857), Yate (1888), Aubin (1908), Byron (1981), and Chaffetz (1981), and guide books, especially those describing different parts of Afghanistan by Wolfe (later N.H. Dupree) (1965, 1966, 1967, 1971). In order to widen the discussion a little, at one or two points I have referred to aspects of shrines and

pilgrimages in other Islamic countries and in medieval Europe. For the latter I have relied on the work of the historians noted above. For the former I have used a variety of sources, in particular historical studies such as Gibb and Bowen (1957) and ethnographies of varying degrees of sophistication such as Canaan (1927), Castagné (1951), Kriss (1960), Snegarev (1977a and 1977b), Van Bruinessen (1978) and Jeffery (1979a and 1979b).

Chapter One Origins of the Saint and Shrine Cults in Islam, Saints in Islam and Christianity, Shrines and Mosques

"God has saints, auliya ..., whom He has specially distinguished by His friendship and whom He has chosen to be the governors of His kingdom and has marked out to manifest His actions and has peculiarly favoured with diverse kinds of miracles ... He has made the saints the governors of the universe ... Through the blessing of their advent the rain falls from heaven, and through the purity of their lives the plants spring up from the earth, and through their spiritual influence the Muslims gain victories over the unbelievers" (Hujwiri, Kashf al-Mahjub, pages 212-3, translated by R.A. Nicholson, London, Luzac & Co., 1911)

In this chapter by way of introduction I discuss the origins of shrine cults in the Islamic world, exploring some of the links between the development of two theories of saintly intercession, Sufi and Shi'ite, and the emergence of Muslim shrines. I continue by asking whether all the beliefs and practices associated with Islamic holy men are quite as different from those associated with Christian saints as Bryan Turner (1974:56-71) has suggested. In the last section I briefly discuss the different functions of shrines and mosques.

a. Origins of the Shrine and Saint Cult in Islam :-

In view of the close association between shrines and pilgrimages and the cult of holy men or saints in Islam, it may be useful at the outset to explain how this arose. Early Islam appears to have had no place for intermediaries between Allah and man (Goldziher 1971 II:258). The Prophet Muhammad criticised Jews and Christians for their reliance on saintly mediation because it seemed to deny the uniqueness of God (see Koran 9:31). Muhammad himself always insisted that he was merely the mouthpiece for the revelations which Allah was making available to mankind through him, and not a miracle-worker like Jesus (see Koran 5:109-10, 17:95-6). The Koran does speak of awliyā' (plural of walī - 'someone who is close', 'friend', 'helper'), men and women who devote themselves to God and lead worthy lives (Goldziher 1971, II:263). They are to be admired and emulated and have first place in paradise. However, they are no more powerful than anyone else in this world, and there is no suggestion that in the next they will be able to act as mediators between Allah and man.

Nevertheless, for various reasons such as the strength of earlier religious traditions among converts to Islam, the need to compete with Christian and Hindu miracle-working holy men, and perhaps also the "insurmountable barrier" which divided an infinite and unapproachable Allah from the ordinary believer, this attitude was to change dramatically (Von Grunebaum 1951: 68, Goldziher 1971 II:225, Sumption 1975:60). A

distinctively Islamic theory of intercessionary and miracle-working saints was evolved which in its 'parochialised' forms was easily integrated with popular pre-Islamic beliefs in the powers of holy men and spirits and places associated with them.

This Islamic theory of saintly mediation in fact took two forms, but the ideas behind both are remarkably similar, and Schimmel (1975:41) suggests that they both had a common source in the teachings of Jafar as-Sadiq (d. 765), the sixth Imam of the Shi'ites. Among the mystics, the Sufis, the notion of the walī, the friend of Allah, underwent very considerable elaboration. It came to be believed that there was a whole hierarchy of awliyā', hidden and visible, which culminated in the qutb ('axis' or 'pole' of the universe) or ghaws ('defender'). The invisible qutb is believed to be the channel for the spiritual energy upon which the well-being of the world depends. He is the true caliph or 'successor' to the Prophet Muhammad and ruler of the Islamic community which he governs through the invisible hierarchy of abdāl saints ('substitutes') and the visible saints, the pīrs, guides upon the mystical path developed by the Sufis (Schimmel 1975:200). One of the most important characteristics of the walī is that Allah has favoured him with spiritual power (baraka) which is manifested in the performance of miracles (karamāt) (Trimingham 1971:28, 301).

In practical terms, Sufism began in the ninth century as a tendency on the part of a few individuals

to look for ways of approaching God more closely and of closing the gap which seemed to separate Him from the ordinary Muslim (Schimmel 1975:23-97). By the twelfth century it had become a mass movement. Different mystical doctrines, rules and methods were developed by the Sufi pīrs and transmitted to their successors. Loosely organised associations (turuq) sprang up around the teachers of these different tendencies and they spread very rapidly across the Sunni, and to a somewhat lesser extent, the Shi'ite world (Trimingham 1971:25).

Until the eleventh century, Hodgson (1974 II: 218) argues, most of the holy places in the Muslim world, the popular shrines where ordinary people were able to gain access to sources of supernatural power, remained in the hands of the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians (zimma, or 'people of the covenant'). In places like Syria Muslims had been able to share with Christians the cults of the tombs of the Biblical prophets. However, it was only with the spread and general acceptance of popular Sufism with its belief in miracle-working saints that it became possible to produce Islamic shrines everywhere, and to every purpose, or to Islamise older ones. Through the veneration of the Sufi pīrs and their graves, many pre-Islamic beliefs and practices centred on miracle-working people and places were given some sort of Islamic colouring (Goldziher 1971 II:281). It became common practice for people to visit the supposed tombs of these pīrs and other places associated with them in the belief that the prayers they said and the offerings they made there would induce them to intercede with Allah.

The tombs of the famous pīrs became popular centres of pilgrimage and the celebrations of their birthdays became major local or even regional festivals in which huge crowds took part (see e.g. Von Grunebaum 1951:72-6).

The Shi'ite theologians' theory of saintly intercession was put in somewhat different terms. Shi'ism began as a political movement following the death of the Prophet in 632. Its aim was to secure the leadership of the Muslim community for the Prophet's family, in particular for Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, and Ali's descendants. It was not long before it acquired a religious dimension as well. The Shi'ites (from shī'at āli, the 'party of Ali') developed the notion that the Prophet had been the possessor of special divine knowledge which was inherited by members of his family, and that by virtue of this they were the only legitimate rulers of the Islamic community. It came to be believed that in each generation one of Ali's descendants was the true Imam, that is the inheritor of the Prophet's religious and political authority, whether or not he was in a position to exercise it. By the eighth century the difficulty of deciding in which line of Ali's descendants this authority was inherited was beginning to divide the Shi'ites into a number of separate movements (Hodgson 1974 I:256-67).

It is worth pointing out here that the Sunnis (from sunna, 'custom', referring to the words and deeds of the Prophet as reported in the Traditions (ḥadīṣ)), shared the Shi'ite reverence for the Prophet's family but

condemned the tendency to turn Muhammad and his descendants from human beings into emanations of God. As regards the leadership of the Muslim community, the Sunni view was that ideally the ruler should be from the Prophet's clan, the Quraysh, but need not be from his immediate family as the Shi'ites demanded. The Sunnis also believed that the ruler should be elected by the notables of the community whereas the Shi'ites held that their Imam held office by divine appointment and was designated by his predecessor (Hourani 1967:12-5, B. Lewis 1974:160).

The best known of the Shi'ite movements today is the Twelver (isnā'asharia) whose members form a large community, especially in Iran and Iraq where they are in the majority. As the name implies, the Twelver Shi'ites recognise twelve Imams in the line of descent from Ali. The twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, disappeared from the world in 880 and remains in occultation while still guiding the fortunes of his people from behind the scenes rather like the Sufis' invisible 'pole' or qutb. One day, it is believed, he will return to restore justice and righteousness to the world. The Sevener Shi'ites, or Ismailis, comprise another important community today, though they form a small minority in Iran and Afghanistan. They shared the Twelver Shi'ites belief that the Imamate was inherited by the descendants of Ali and Fatima as far as Jafar as-Sadiq (d. 765). However, they recognised Jafar's son Ismail (d. c. 760) as his successor and believed that Ismail's son Muhammad was the seventh and last of the "visible" Imams, whereas the Twelvers followed another son, Musa Qasim (d. 799) (Hodgson op. cit).

This belief in the semi-divine qualities of the Imams meant that the Twelver Shi'ites in particular quickly began to see them as effective mediators between man and God. The fact that all were believed to have been murdered by their enemies in some underhand fashion (except of course for the twelfth Imam) reinforced this. It meant that they were regarded as being especially sympathetic to the sufferings of others, and at the same time, it was believed, by identifying with their sufferings their devotees would acquire divine grace. Once this happened, there was little difficulty in accepting that pilgrimage to their tombs was the best way of persuading them to intercede with Allah. Indeed it came to be believed that without their intercession the ordinary man could never hope to be admitted to paradise (D.M. Donaldson 1933:344-6, Arjomand 1979:93-5). In the tombs of the Imams the Shi'ites were able to produce their own shrines much earlier than the Sunnis. Soon after his death in 680, Husain's tomb at Kerbela, for example, became a place of pilgrimage. It was destroyed in 850 by the anti-Shi'ite Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil and not rebuilt until late in the tenth century (D.M. Donaldson 1933:91, Ayoub 1978:181).

Popular belief soon extended the Imams' intercessionary role to their descendants, the imāmzādas, as well, and enlarged it so that they were believed to be capable of performing miracles in this world as well as having such influence in the next. Since there could in theory be almost any number of imāmzādas, it was easy enough to associate a place of pilgrimage with one of

them, and thereby justify a cult. As in the Sunni world, a complex network of pilgrimages developed to the great shrines like Kerbela and Mashad. Of course, as we shall see in the next chapter, just as not all Sunni shrines are associated with Sufis, so not all Shi'ite ones are connected with the Imams and imāmzādas. However, it does seem to have been pilgrimage to the tombs of, and other places associated with, Sufis and Imams and imāmzādas, which provided a precedent for cults centred on other figures.

b. "Saints" in Christianity and Islam

In this section I want briefly to discuss the question whether it is reasonable to use the word 'saint' to refer to the different sorts of holy men to be found in the Islamic world, awliyā', marabouts, pīrs, imāmzādas, shaykhs, īshāns (see glossary), and so on. In particular I want to comment on Bryan Turner's (1974:56) view that "the terms saint and marabout (under which I shall include walī, Sufi, agurram and sheikh) are mirror-image terms precisely because Islam and Christianity are, in crucial respects, opposed forms of religion. Thus all the criteria which define saintship are reversed in the definition of marabout". To begin with, it is worth noting that the term walī is not exactly equivalent to the Roman Catholic notion of saint, as it is closely connected with the mystery of initiation and progress on the mystical path, whereas in the Catholic Church saint-hood is associated with a life lived at an heroic level

of Christian faithfulness and integrity (or, if a martyr, because of the circumstances of his violent death) (Attwater 1965:10-11, Trimmingham 1971:133-5, Schimmel 1975:204). However, in spite of this difference at the dogmatic level, popular attitudes to the holy figures associated with Islamic shrines are, as I shall show below, remarkably similar to those Christians held about their popular saints.

Bryan Turner's objections to the use of the term saint to refer to Islamic holy men are somewhat different. For him Christian saints are canonised after their deaths, and orthodox (indeed they are often theologians) whereas Islamic 'saints' are recognised as such by popular acclaim while still living. They are heterodox, peripheral to the central Islamic tradition and as such are overwhelmingly found in rural areas. To begin with, it should be pointed out that Turner's primary definition of the word 'saint' is that adopted by the Roman Catholic church. Hence, in his view, the only person who may legitimately be regarded as a saint "in the strong sense" is someone canonised by the Church (1974:58). This way of approaching the problem takes no account of the fact that it was relatively late in the history of the Western Church that the papacy was able to assert its control over canonisation. Competing definitions of 'sainthood' persisted at least until the Counter-Reformation (see e.g. Sumption 1975:269, Finucane 1977:36). Thus, for example, it appears to have been relatively common for medieval Christian hermits such as Godric of Finchale and the Serbian serf Heimrad to acquire

a reputation for sanctity and to be visited by people living in the neighbourhood for the same reasons as they visited the tombs and relics of dead saints (Brooke 1975: 40-4, Finucane 1977:126-7). In medieval Europe, therefore, sanctity was sometimes attributed to living as well as dead holy men.

Moreover, while Turner is correct in saying that Islamic holy men tend to be recognised as such in their lifetimes, people associated with Islamic shrines have quite often not been regarded as holy men while alive. It is for instance the fact of his violent and unmerited death which often makes the tomb of the shahīd or martyr the focus of a popular cult. It is perhaps worth noting that in medieval Europe there was often a spontaneous veneration of popular heroes who met a sudden and violent death such as Simon de Montfort, Canute II of Denmark and even Thomas Becket (V. Turner 1974:48, Sumption 1975:286). Nor is it the case that those Muslims whose tombs became shrines were always heterodox in their views. An outstanding example is the religious and legal scholar al-Shafi'i (d. 820) whose grave mosque in Cairo became an important centre of pilgrimage (Kriss 1960 I:60-1). Thus, not only has Turner failed to take account of the fact that the criteria by which Christian and Islamic holy men are recognised as such once resembled each other a great deal more than they do now, but he has also not fully appreciated what Islamic 'sainthood' entails in the context of shrines.

In fact, Turner (1974:68) specifically denies

the possibility of usefully comparing Christian saints and Islamic marabouts in respect of the miracle-working properties of their tombs, though both were sources of cures as he himself admits. In the first place, he finds it significant that the Muslim notion of baraka is "more popular, diffuse and amorphous" than the Christian theologians' 'charisma' (1974:67). Although this is perfectly correct, ordinary Christians nevertheless tried to tap the powers of the shrines of their dead saints in much the same way as did the Muslims those of their dead marabouts. For the ordinary Christian charisma amounted to contagious magic every bit as much as did baraka for the Muslim (B. Turner 1974:68, Finucane 1977:89, Einzmann 1977:98). Turner (ibid) also quite rightly points out that there was no trade in the bones of Islamic holy men as there was with those of Christian saints. Nevertheless it is not true to say that holy relics were unknown in Islam, as we shall see below. What is more important, however, is that this does not mean that it is not instructive to compare Christian shrines, particularly medieval ones, and Islamic ones. Not only do Muslims and Christians appear to have shared very similar ideas about the contagious power of holy tombs and relics, but to this day they also enter into the same sort of transactions with the holy men associated with them, vowing to make such and such an offering if such and such a request is granted.

Thirdly, let us examine briefly Bryan Turner's (1974:63) assertion that Islamic marabouts are basically a rural, heterodox phenomenon in conflict with the

orthodox Islam of the cities, while Christian saints are orthodox. There was, he suggests, a more or less permanent division in Islam between the ruling institutions (the military, sultanate and the lawyers) and the popular, rural and tribal religion of the Sufi brotherhoods. This is a point made originally by Ernest Gellner (1969:131), though he did not put it quite so crudely, and I shall return to it later. Suffice it to say at this point that the division Turner talks about never existed in Islamic society. Hodgson (1974 II:221), for example, points out that in the Middle Ages Sufism came to supplement if not actually supplant the Sharia as a principle of social unity and order. In Trimingham's view the Sufi Orders and their awliyā' "consecrated" secular institutions, being closely associated, for instance, with craft and commercial guilds (1971:230). Just to take one example, in Afghanistan soldiers traditionally had close links with Sufi pīrs (Poullada 1973: 77); in fact Ahmad Shah Durrani (ruled 1747-1772), who may be said to be the founder of modern Afghanistan, was a famous Sufi (his tomb in Kandahar is a popular shrine today). Sufism came to permeate all levels of society and played a central role in it for many centuries (see e.g. K. Brown 1976:111, Gibb and Bowen 1957 I part 2:201). Nor is it true that Sufis necessarily held heterodox views. Van Bruinessen (1978:312) points out that both strictly orthodox and extremely unorthodox beliefs and practices have been found within the Naqshbandi order for example (see also Algar 1976:150). Sufism was much more than simply a heterodox and rural phenomenon catering for those on the margins of civilised society.

On the other hand, Bryan Turner (1974:69-70) does identify one crucial difference between Christian and Islamic ideas about sanctity. This is the heritable quality of holiness in Islam. As we saw above, Shi'ites attached great importance to descent from the close relatives of the Prophet. Traditionally, Sunnis also believed that the descendants of Ali and Fatima, known as sayyids, possessed a degree of divine blessing and were entitled to the alms of the faithful (Hodgson 1974 II:452). In addition the emergence of lineages of holy men supposedly descended from a famous Sufi pīr or shaykh has been a widespread phenomenon in Islamic history. Turner (ibid) is also right to draw our attention to the fact that partly for this reason Islamic holy men have played important political roles whereas Christian saints have not done so.

These differences are important enough to justify his assertion that to refer to living holy men in the Islamic world as 'saints' is to oversimplify matters unduly. On the other hand, when it comes to a discussion of shrines, then it is convenient and not unduly misleading to refer to those whose supposed tombs and relics become the foci of popular cults among Muslims as saints, since the roles they perform and the ways in which they are approached are often remarkably similar to those associated with the veneration of Christian saints. Moreover, Turner's argument that the terms saint and marabout are mirror-images of each other surely conceals an interesting problem. The Christian saint and the Muslim marabout might more plausibly be said to represent

'transformations' of the same underlying themes. Among these we might number the idea of mediation between man and God in the form of supernatural power channelled by holy men, the association between the sacred and the miraculous, the contagious quality of the sacred, the miraculous power released by sudden violent death, and so on. Unless this is recognised, there will be no incentive to find out exactly where the differences and resemblances between holy figures in Islam and Christianity lie, and how they altered over the centuries.

c. shrine and mosque

For both Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims the mosque is a place where the daily prayers may be performed. The most common word for mosque in Iran and Afghanistan is masjid, which means 'place of prostration' (sujud). Sunnis attach more importance than Shi'ites to the communal performance of the prescribed daily prayers in a mosque. Nevertheless, Sunnis are not obliged to attend the mosque, even for the most important communal prayer, at noon on Fridays, when there is usually a sermon preceded by a mention of the recognised ruler's name (Gulick 1976:177). Prayers said in a mosque and in company with others are no more effective than those said in solitude in any ritually clean place. In no sense is the mosque ever a shrine for the divinity, as was the Gothic cathedral for example. "The mosque is clearly a non-sacral place of worship" (H.W. Turner 1979:266). Unless it is also a saint's shrine, or part of

one, no baraka inheres in it as a place. The shrine or ziyārat, by contrast, is a place which is believed to possess and emit baraka which may be understood as divine favour in the form of spiritual power (see e.g. Trimingham 1971:301). The numerous discussions of its nature include Westermarck (1926 I:34), Geertz (1968: 44-5), Douglas (1970:131-5), Gellner (1970:43-6), and B. Turner (1974:67-9). All I want to do here is to describe the way baraka appears to work in the context of shrines. As I pointed out above, the Sunni theory of baraka is that one of the signs of the true saint or walī is possession of baraka which is demonstrated by the performance of miracles (karāmāt) (Schimmel 1975:206). Just as "people in fact become possessors of baraka by being treated as possessors of it" (Gellner 1970:46), so with shrines. Since baraka has a contagious quality and is transmitted materially, the things which possess it are usually those which are believed to have been in contact with 'saints' of one kind or another. In particular, their supposed tombs and footprints are often heavily 'charged' with baraka and emit it continuously. In the last section I noted that the tombs of martyrs (shahadā), who were not regarded as holy while living, are often treated as sources of baraka too. There is no doubt that baraka is more than simply the "success-biased" power described by Douglas (1970:135). Kriss suggests that the power which baraka-charged objects possess can best be described as a healing one (1960 I:4). It is certainly true that saints' tombs are believed to be powerful places of healing.

One important difference between a shrine and a mosque therefore derives from the fact that a shrine is a sacred place of power, charged with beneficent energy of divine origin. The tomb, relic or other object associated with the saint is the immediate source of this power. The closer one approaches it the stronger becomes the emission of baraka. Hence, as we shall see below, the goal of many visitors to a shrine is simply to get as near the tomb of a saint as possible and to remain there for as long as they can. In this respect at least, baraka appears to work in a very similar way to the charisma of the medieval Christian saints whose relics "emitted a kind of holy radioactivity which bombarded everything in the area" including the hopeful pilgrims who came to kiss, touch and pray before their tombs (Finucane 1977:26).

In order to benefit from the curative power of a shrine it may simply be enough to absorb some of the baraka it automatically emits. The dead saints' powers extend beyond their shrines, but if one wants a saint to help with other than medical problems, to bring success in love or business for example, then one has to draw his attention to the desired goal and establish some personal link with him. I shall discuss some of the prayers and rituals used for this purpose in chapter five. Here I want to emphasize that the saint is most responsive to prayers uttered in the vicinity of his tomb and that the shrine is therefore the most appropriate place to contact him (c.f. Finucane 1977:39) though he can be contacted elsewhere (see e.g. Betteridge 1980:146). In this

respect too the shrine contrasts with the mosque. The prayers uttered in a mosque testify to one's resolve to honour and obey Allah, but they are not designed to open a personal channel of communication with him nor to extract some favour from him. By contrast the prayers one addresses to a saint are likely to be of a much more personal nature, and are likely to be requests for help whether in this world or in the world to come. The importance of the shrine as a place of power meant that there evolved a complex network of pilgrimages to the Afghan and Iranian shrines as well as various rituals to be performed at them. I say more about these below.

Summary:-

I began by looking at the origins of shrines and pilgrimages in Islam and their close association with the cult of holy men or saints. I noted that in spite of the uncompromising monotheism of the Prophet, within two or three hundred years of his death, both Sunni and Shi'ite branches of Islam had developed theories of saintly intercession. In the Sunni case, the intercessors were the Sufi pīrs, instructors on the mystical path, and in the Shi'ite case, the Twelve Imams and their close relatives (though there were Shi'ite Sufis too). These saints were regarded as being especially close to and beloved of Allah and hence endowed by him with supernatural power, baraka, which enabled them to perform miracles. A complex network of pilgrimages to the tombs of these saints developed, and many pre-Islamic holy

places were brought into the Islamic fold by being associated with one or other of them.

In the second place I raised the question whether it is reasonable to use the term saint to refer to all the different kinds of holy men to be found in the Islamic world, walīs, pīrs, imāmzādas, marabouts, shaykhs, īshāns and so on. Bryan Turner has argued that it is misleading to do so because Christian saints are canonised, dead and orthodox whereas Islamic 'saints' are regarded as such by popular acclaim while still living, heterodox, peripheral to the central Islamic tradition and predominantly found in rural areas. I put forward some objections to this view. Firstly, Turner neglects the historical dimension which means that he takes no account of the fact that medieval Christian saints were often much more like Muslim holy men than are modern Roman Catholic ones. Secondly, Muslims and Christians appear to have shared very similar notions about the contagious power of the tombs and relics of holy men, and to have attempted to tap this power in ways which were often remarkably alike. Thirdly, I showed that it was not the case that Islamic holy men have always been a rural, heterodox phenomenon in conflict with the orthodox Islam of the ‘ulamā. I say more about this point in particular in chapter seven. Nevertheless, I suggested that Turner was right to draw attention to an important difference between Christian and Islamic ideas about the sacred, namely the heritable quality of holiness in Islam and its absence in Christianity. For this reason, I agreed with Turner that it is probably an oversimplification to refer

to living Muslim holy men as saints. However, the fact that the roles these holy men perform when they are dead and the ways in which they are approached are so similar to those associated with Christian saints means that it is convenient and not unduly misleading to refer to those dead holy men whose tombs, relics and so on have become the objects of pilgrimage, as saints.

Thirdly, I outlined the basic differences between the functions of the mosque and the shrine. The mosque is a non-sacral place of worship whereas the shrine is a sacred place, 'charged' with beneficent power of divine origin. This power can be tapped partly by getting as close to its source as possible. The shrine is also the most appropriate place for establishing personal contact with the saint and invoking his help with this or other-worldly problems. The mosque by contrast is a place for performing the required, stereotyped daily prayers, and there is no idea that by performing them that one is establishing personal contact with God.

Chapter Two Types of Islamic Shrine in Iran and Afghanistan

"The most famous of these prints is at Qadamgah, which was "the last stopping-place of the Imam Reza on his return from Kerbela to Tus, where he was destined to find martyrdom" (Bricteux, Pays, 161). Inside the mosque, constructed in 1680 ... by order of the Safavid Suleiman, a slab of black stone, fixed to a wall, carries the hollowed-out impression, of a natural size, of the Imam's feet. Its origin is variously explained. Eastwick (II:272) records the mutawalli's story: "The Imam was striving to convert the fire-worshippers (i.e. Zoroastrians) who lived there; their sacred fire burned on the stone on which the Imam placed the marks of his feet, in order to give them a sign" ... at Nishapur, in the mausoleum of the imāmzāda Mahruq "there is, according to Sani-ud-Dawla, a stone which carries the Imam Reza's footprint. It is curious, says Sani, that this impression is half the size of that at Qadamgah" (Bricteux, Pays, 159)" (Masse' 1938:391) (my translation).

In this chapter I explore the range and variety of the objects of Islamic pilgrimage in Iran and Afghanistan. I begin by looking briefly at the ways in which Spooner and Louis Dupree have classified these shrines. I suggest an alternative approach which involves, firstly, identifying the sorts of object which form the raison d'être of shrines, and, secondly, the types of saint associated with them. I conclude by outlining a second classification, the criterion in this case being the distance over which the shrines draw

pilgrims. This enables me to indicate the relative importance of the shrines I shall be discussing in subsequent chapters.

a. Spooner and L. Dupree's classifications:-

Spooner (1963:90) classifies shrines in southern and eastern Iran into six types:-

- (1) "tombs and places alleged to have some real connection with an Imam or the close relative of an Imam"
- (2) "tombs of well-known historical persons"
- (3) "tombs of comparatively recent and presumably historical persons who had commanded unusual respect in their own communities"
- (4) "tombs of Shaikhs and Khājés about whom little or nothing is remembered but who were perhaps once equivalent to type (3)"
- (5) "pre-Islamic shrines or monuments still revered by the local population"
- (6) "shrines, etc, based on legends and dreams, or a-historical (sic) phenomena".

This typology is more confusing than helpful. For example, it quite often happens that the existence of a place where a relative of an Imam is supposedly buried is revealed through a dream (see e.g. Alberts 1963:814), so that in practice it may be difficult to disentangle categories (1) and (6). Moreover, the tombs of the Imams themselves and their close relatives at least may be said to belong to well-known historical persons, so that category (1) really belongs in category (2). Part of the problem seems to be that Spooner is trying to take into account the origins of the shrines which in the majority of cases are impossible to establish. Nor is it particularly helpful from a sociological point of view. We need to be aware of the range of phenomena and social roles to which people attribute sanctity, whether their grounds for doing so are historically or dogmatically sound.

Louis Dupree (1976:4) offers a classification of Afghan shrines the main criterion being, he says, their function through time:-

- (1) "pre-Islamic shrines not associated with an individual"
- (2) "Islamic shrines associated with an individual, mythical or real, through local traditions"
- (3) "Islamic shrines, associated with relics"

- (4) "Islamic shrines with existing brotherhoods, based on the teachings of an individual buried on the spot"
- (5) "Islamic shrines, without brotherhoods, but based on the teachings of a known individual buried on the spot".

Several criticisms may be made of this typology. Firstly, it is not very clear what is meant by category (5); it is difficult to see how a shrine as opposed to a brotherhood can be based on someone's teachings. Secondly, by his first category, "pre-Islamic shrines", Dupree appears to mean not shrines which have survived since the days before Islam, but shrines like trees and heaps of stones of the sort which non-Muslims may once have worshipped. Even if we accept that such shrines may usefully be referred to as pre-Islamic, other sources (e.g. Einzmann 1977:31-2, Snegarev 1977a:4) make it clear that they are almost without exception associated with a saint, though as we shall see below practically nothing may be known about him. Dupree's first category is therefore not very useful. Thirdly, like Spooner's, Dupree's classification blurs critical distinctions and omits others. What, one might well ask, is the real difference between his categories (2) and (5), particularly if it is the shrine's function which is in question?

The confusion arises from the fact that neither Spooner nor Dupree seem to be very sure exactly which aspect of shrines interests them. The criteria they are

employing seem muddled; it is never clear whether it is the age of the shrines, their main sources of attraction, or their contemporary organisation which is the more important. Before we go on to look at another way of classifying shrines, it should be pointed out that in both Iran and Afghanistan the general term for a shrine is ziyārat gāh, usually shortened to ziyārat, and visiting a shrine is known as ziyārat kardan. The term ziyārat is never used for the hajj or umra, the pilgrimages associated with Mecca. Within the general class of ziyārats, people appear to draw a fundamental distinction between the grave or tomb of a saint on the one hand, and on the other a place or object which has somehow or other become associated with him. The terms most often used in Afghanistan to refer to a saint's tomb are mazār or qabr, while in Iran the grave of a descendant of an Imam, which is one of the commonest types of shrine, is known as an imāmzāda (literally 'descendant of an Imam'), and the graves of other saints may be referred to by such terms as pīr (Einzmann 1977:18, Betteridge 1981:1, Brooks 1981:11). A place hallowed because of its association with a saint is commonly referred to in both countries as a qadam gāh or nazar gāh (literally 'place of a footstep' and 'place of a look' or 'glance'). The former, the qadam gāh, is as the term suggests usually a saint's supposed foot or hand print, while a nazar gāh is simply some natural feature which is regarded as sacred because it is believed that a saint has looked at it or been near it.

From our point of view, the fact that nearly all shrines, whether graves, real or supposed, qadam gāhs or nazar gāhs, are associated with a saint, however

artificial the connection or indefinite or stereotyped his image may be, means that any classification of shrines which aims adequately to encompass their range and diversity needs to have two axes. The first records the range of phenomena which can be associated with a saint, and the other the variety of roles which can confer sacredness. I begin by discussing the former.

b. sacred places and things:-

In the first place it may be helpful to distinguish between 'man-made' and 'natural' shrines, though as I show below this should not be pressed too far. The distinction is analogous but not exactly equivalent to the emic distinction between the mazār or imāmzāda and the qadam gāh or nazar gāh. One reason why it is not exactly equivalent is that man-made nazar gāhs do occur. The Nazar Gah-i-Wali, for instance, outside Kabul, is laid out in the form of a grave with upright stones at head and foot like those which are placed at the head and foot of a proper grave (Einzmann 1977:233).

Beginning with man-made shrines, the first point to note is that most often these are graves. They range from proper tombs with the most artistically carved marble sarcophagi lying in splendid mausoleums to simple mounds of earth with stones at head and feet. One of the finest examples of the former in either Iran or Afghanistan is Gazargah, the most celebrated shrine in the city of Herat in western Afghanistan which is built around the tomb of the famous Sufi poet and philosopher,

Khaja Abdullah-i-Ansari (1006-1088) (Wolfe 1966:48-56). Among the other finely decorated tombs and shrines worth mentioning is the large shrine built around the tomb of the eighth Imam, Ali Reza, at Mashad in eastern Iran, which contains the famous mosque built by Gohar Shad the wife of the Timurid Shah Rukh (reigned 1404-47) (Donaldson D.M. 1933:174, Byron 1981:209). However, shrine complexes on this scale are rare, though many smaller shrines contain outstanding architectural and decorative features (see e.g. Nagel 1973:225).

Much more common is a simple mud brick building with one or two rooms; its roof may well be domed. One room will contain the tomb of the saint supposedly buried there, while the other may contain other graves such as those of relatives or followers of the saint, or may be used as a prayer room. Often the tomb lies inside a walled enclosure and has a carved headstone and perhaps a wooden fence but is otherwise open to the elements. A modest shrine consists simply of a mound of earth with stones at head and foot, and nothing else to mark it out except perhaps for a few poles to which flags or rags have been fixed, a niche for candles and some pegs driven into the ground in front (see e.g. Einzmann 1977:277). In its most rudimentary form the shrine consist merely of a cairn of stones with a few flagpoles (see e.g. Einzmann 1977:275)¹.

(footnote¹: However a story often heard in connection with simple shrines is that people have tried to build proper sanctuaries but that modesty has driven the saints involved to render all their efforts unsuccessful by causing the buildings to collapse (see e.g. Masse' 1938: 389, L. Dupree 1976:13, Einzmann 1977:211, 254, Susan Wright, personal communication).)

Buildings housing relics form a second class of 'man-made' shrines. We saw in the previous chapter that relics have played a much less important role in Islamic than in Christian shrine cults. Unlike medieval Christians, Muslims have never thought it necessary to have a relic of a saint in order to justify his cult (B. Turner 1974:68). Often it has been enough for a respected member of a local community to dream that unknown to everyone hitherto a saint has all along been buried in or near the village, or that there is some previously unsuspected association with a saint, for a shrine to be built in his honour (see e.g. Spooner 1963: 88, Alberts 1963:814, Einzmann 1977:11). Nevertheless relics are found in the Muslim world (see e.g. Goldziher 1971 II:322-32). One of the most famous is the supposed head of the Imam Husain in the mosque of the same name in Cairo (Kriss 1960 I:53). Among the most popular relics are hairs from the Prophet's beard. The Afghan cities of Kandahar and Ghazni, for example, both have shrines whose principal attraction is a relic of this kind (for an Iranian example see B.A. Donaldson 1938:115), while the Prophet's cloak is supposedly kept in the Da Kherqa Sharif ziyārat in Kandahar (L. Dupree 1976:8).

The reason I suggested above that the distinction between the 'man-made' and the 'natural' shrines should not be pressed too far is that qadam gāhs, supposed hand or footprints of saints in rocks, have sometimes been deliberately carved, and are sometimes natural holes or depressions of a shape such as to suggest a hand or footprint. For example, the supposed

impressions of the hand of Ali to be found in two of Kabul's most important shrines, the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi and the Ziyarat-i-Panjah-i-Shah, appear to be the work of human hands rather than saintly ones (Einzmann 1977:120, 199, see also Wolfe 1965:177). By contrast the supposed footprint of the Imam Reza at the shrine known as Qadamgah, not far from Nishapur on the road to Mashad, appears to be simply a hollow in a rock which somewhat resembles a footprint (see e.g. Ferrier 1857:492, Masse' 1938:391). Man-made qadam gāhs and nazar gāhs may thus be said to form a third class of man-made shrines.

As far as concerns the natural features which can become the focus of a cult, these are of five kinds, rocks and boulders, trees, springs and wells, caves, and hills, mountains and unusual rock formations. As we have just seen, it is sometimes the supposed impression of a saint's hand or foot which makes a rock sacred. In other cases, however, a rock or boulder may be regarded as sacred though it bears no such print. Outside Kabul, for example, is the Sang-i-Bibi (the 'stone of the woman') which is said to have been touched by one of the Prophet's wives (Einzmann 1977:215). The main attraction of the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi, one of Kabul's most popular shrines, is a cavern in the top of which is a rock on which the Prophet's cloak and a hair of his beard are said to have been placed when Ahmad Shah Durrani was taking them to his new capital, Kandahar, having acquired them from the Emir of Bukhara. It is reported that he camped there for the night leaving the relics on the rock; when he collected them in the morning the rock is said to have

been cracked (Einzmann 1977:124). Groups of stones or rocks may also be regarded as shrines, for instance the so-called Chehel Dukhtaran ('forty maidens') near Kabul which consists of forty stones of different sizes (Einzmann 1977:229).

The trees which are regarded as shrines are usually distinctive or striking because of their size, shape, species or location (see e.g. Spooner 1971:176, Einzmann 1977:37). Most of the trees which are the objects of a cult in the Kabul area, for example, are plane trees which are found either in splendid isolation or in small groups and form a striking contrast with the slender poplars growing in rows along the banks of streams and the fruit trees in the orchards which rarely attain any size (Einzmann op. cit.). The nazar gāh of the Twelfth Imam on the road to Bektot, for instance, consists of an area shaded by sixteen huge plane trees. Rags and threads have been tied to the branches and exposed roots of the tree nearest the road; candles have been placed on the roots too, and wooden pegs driven into the ground next to it (Einzmann 1977:216-7). Sacred trees of other species do however occur in the Kabul region. The main attraction of the nazar gāh of Sultan Sahib for example is an almond tree.

In Iran "trees under which saints are said to have sat or slept or to have had a dream are numerous, and they too are considered sacred" (B.A. Donaldson 1938:59). Such trees may be referred to as dirakhthā-i-murād deh ('trees which answer prayers'), and are often

conspicuous because of the pieces of coloured rag tied to their branches (Spooner 1963:89). Among the Bakhtiari tribesmen of the Zagros mountains in western Iran, solitary oak trees often become the foci of minor cults (Brooks personal communication). One shrine in the area is actually built around a tree (Brooks 1981:11). Trees are or have been the objects of cults in many other parts of the Muslim world such as Central Asia (Castagné 1951: 91, 107-8, Snesev 1977a:7-10) and the Near East (Canaan 1927:30, Kriss 1960 I:20).

Springs and wells form a third category of natural objects which have become the objects of cults (see e.g. Ferdinand 1962:141, L. Dupree 1976:5,11, Einzmann 1977:34-6). Einzmann suggests that hot and warm springs are especially likely to be regarded as sacred. Certainly the most famous example in Kabul, the Cheshmeh Khizr, is a warm water spring. It is in fact a well-equipped shrine with a mosque, a home for the attendant and his family and accommodation for visitors. The spring itself rises in a grotto and forms a small pool of lukewarm water. A wooden platform allows visitors to approach the water more easily, and a roof has been built over it (Einzmann 1977:195). The spring is said to owe its existence to Khizr, a mysterious figure about whom I shall say more below, who struck his staff on the ground here causing the water to flow.²

(footnote²: When Mahmud of Ghazni (reigned 998-1030) halted here on one of his military expeditions to India, Khizr is said to have appeared to him in a dream and prophesied that the campaign would be successful. It was out of gratitude for this that Mahmud supposedly had the shrine buildings erected (Einzmann 1977:193-4, see also Wolfe 1965:96-7).)

Several other shrines in the Kabul area have curative springs as well as other objects of veneration. The shrine known as the Cheshmeh Qutb Haydar Agha, for example, as well as boasting the tomb of a saint, has a spring whose water is said to be of general benefit in case of illness and to be particularly useful for skin complaints (Einzmann 1977:239-40, for an example from northern Afghanistan see L. Dupree 1976:5). Sacred springs are found in Iran too. At the bottom of the hillside high upon which is the famous shrine of Bibi Shahrbanu outside the town of Rayy near Tehran, for instance, is a spring with a magnificent mulberry tree, where petitions are offered up by pilgrims (Boyce 1976: 37).

Caves are a fourth natural phenomenon which can become the focus of a cult. Einzmann (1977:34) suggests that caves have an innately mysterious quality which can be seen in the Kabul area, for example, in the popular belief that caves have invisible extensions which lead directly to the city of Kandahar in the south or to Mecca itself. A good example of such a shrine is Baba-i-Wali in the village of Argandeh Bala outside Kabul, which consists of a cave in a hillside reached by a narrow passage along which the visitor must crawl. The cave contains an earth mound framed by a wooden bedstead to which rags and amulets have been attached. A large niche on the western side contains cloths, rags and copies of the Koran and represents the supposed exit. Baba-i-Wali is said to have been a local man who disappeared through this to Kandahar (Einzmann 1977:230-1). A well-known

cave shrine in northern Afghanistan is supposed to contain the Seven Sleepers. The Koran (18:9-27) tells the story of a number of men seeking the truth in the company of their faithful dog, several centuries before the time of the Prophet. In his mercy Allah put them to sleep in this cave to await the Day of Judgement (Yate 1888:151-6, L. Dupree 1973:116, Chaffetz 1981:102-7).

An interesting Iranian example is the cave in the Zagros mountains known as Pir Qar ('venerable cave'); a descendant of one of the Imams is said to have entered this cave to pray and never to have been seen again. The cave is the shrine's main attraction but a stream rises nearby and the entrance to the cave is surrounded by huge cypress trees (Brooks 1981:12). B.A. Donaldson (1938:60) describes another cavern regarded as a shrine near Mashad in northeastern Iran. The cave is next to a waterfall, and prayers, rags and strings have been plastered high up on its roof. "Apparently these votive offerings were first fastened into soft mud and then thrown with skill and strength up against the vaulted ceiling where they have remained" (for other examples see Masse' 1938:395, Fischer 1973 I:217).

The fifth and final class of natural shrines consists of conspicuous mountains and curious rock formations. In the Paghman chain to the northeast of Kabul, for instance, is a mountain called Mangal Khola. No snow adheres to its precipitous eastern face and it resembles a black triangle on a white surface. Ali is said to have fought against the devil here on this

mountain and after defeating him to have climbed down into a cavern which led him straight to Mecca (Einzmann 1977:212-3). On the highest point of a northern spur of the Hindu Kush mountains in the province of Baghlan there is said to be a shrine known as Malek-i-Azhdahar (literally 'king dragon'). A famous Iranian example is the shrine of Ain-Ali and Zain-Ali, or Ainal-Zainal, supposedly two sons of Ali, which is situated on top of a hill outside the city of Tabriz in northwestern Iran (Aubin 1908:24-5, Masse' 1938:403). Many local sanctuaries in the Talesh region of northwestern Iran are situated on high points (Bazin 1980:200).³ In other cases it is an unusual rock formation which is associated with a shrine. Near Surkhab Bum in central Afghanistan, for example, is a nazar gāh of Ali which consists of a hill somewhat resembling a dragon. It is believed to be a dragon which was killed by Ali and turned into stone (L. Dupree 1976:5-6).

c. sacred roles:-

Along the second axis of this classificatory scheme are plotted those social and religious roles which are now or in the past have been commonly regarded by Afghan and Iranian Muslims as having a sacred aspect.

(footnote³: I have been unable to consult a paper by Bazin (1978) on the subject of natural shrines in the Talesh region)

Before discussing these, I briefly consider the classifications of saints offered by Snesarev and Kriss.

Snesarev (1977a:15-6) classifies saints in Khwarezm (Khiva) in Uzbekistan into four classes:-

- (1) "saints whose image is quite indefinite, for whom there is not even a skeletal life story or proper name, and who are often hidden behind lakab nicknames such as Goiib-bobo (the hidden one), Chinar-bobo (the plane tree), Kechirmas-bobo (the unforgiving), etc"
- (2) "saints who are Biblical-Koranic figures, such as Muso (Moses), Nukh (Noah) ... and many others, i.e. figures who appeared with Islam ... Associated with this group are saints who were figures in the early history of Islam (the first caliphs including Ali; the descendants of the Prophet - Fatima, Hassan, Hussein; certain other associates of Mohammed - Sadvakas, Salman Pars and others)"
- (3) "saints who were medieval Sufis, the founders and leaders of schools and orders, and also their closest followers ... Among them are many missionaries ... who, according to legend, were sent to Central Asia to propagate Islam ... They include the most popular saints in Khorezm ... An even more numerous group of saints, also Sufis, who belonged to purely local dynasties of ishans border on this category"

- (4) "figures who can only be called 'saints' with very considerable stretching of the term ... for the most part representatives of local authority in various periods in the history of Khorezm - rulers, members of their families, some members of the local aristocracy and so forth"

There are two main problems with this scheme. In the first place, the second category contains several different kinds of saint which it might be helpful to distinguish more clearly. As they appear to have been venerated as saints for different reasons, it is useful to deal with the Biblical-Koranic figures, the descendants of the Prophet, and his other associates separately. The other objection is that the classification is not comprehensive; in particular there is no mention of the shahīd. Originally applied to someone who died fighting for the faith, the term shahīd is now more widely used as I explain below. Kriss (1960 I:7) also talks about four types of saint, this time in the Near Eastern context, but they are not quite the same as Snegarev's. They are, firstly, the very important ones, members of the Prophet's family, his descendants and comrades-in arms, secondly, the middle-ranking ones, the founders of the Sufi orders and the Muslim legal schools, thirdly, the purely local saints encountered in nearly every village, and finally, figures from the Old Testament who are referred to as anbiyā (prophets) rather than awliyā. Like those in the first category the anbiyā are usually much venerated.

As with Snasarev's classification the main problem with Kriss's is that his four categories are not sufficiently comprehensive.

In order to appreciate just how widely sanctity has been spread in popular Islam, I suggest that we need to take account of nine different social and religious roles in all. These are (1) Biblical-Koranic figures (2) relatives and descendants of the Prophet (3) heroes of early Islam (4) Sufi-inspired poets (5) 'ulamā/mullas (6) secular rulers (7) folk heroes (8) people of local renown and (9) shahīds. I have intentionally not put women to whom shrines have been dedicated into a separate category because the aspects of their lives which have led to their being sanctified are similar to those which are relevant where men are concerned. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in spite of Goldziher's statement that in the Islamic world "there is full equality of the sexes in the field of saintliness" (1971 II:274), the paucity of shrines of female saints in predominantly Sunni Afghanistan is striking. In Iran by contrast where Shi'ism is the dominant sect, the number of female saints appears to be considerably larger. I go on to discuss these nine categories in more detail.

As far as concerns the first category, figures from the Bible and the Koran, by contrast with some other parts of the Islamic world such as the Fertile Crescent and perhaps surprisingly Central Asia, neither supposed graves nor natural objects are very commonly associated with them in Afghanistan or Iran (Canaan 1927:291-6,

Castagné 1951:79, 85, 106, etc, Kriss 1960 I:7, Bacon 1980:113). One of the few contemporary Afghan examples I have come across is the Cheshmeh Ayub, the 'spring of Job', which is a healing spring in the north of the country (L. Dupree 1976:5), though the fourteenth century traveller Ibn Battuta was shown a tomb of Ezekiel in Balkh (Trimingham 1971:92). An example of an Iranian shrine associated with a Biblical figure is the supposed tomb of Samuel near Sara in Khuzistan (Masse 1938:397).

A mysterious figure who, as we saw above, crops up in connection with shrines in many parts of the Muslim world, including Iran and Afghanistan, is Khizr (Kriss 1960 I:154, Aziz Ahmad 1969:49). Khizr might almost as well be put into the category of a folk hero, but may also be regarded as Koranic because he is identified with the mysterious figure who came to Moses' aid in Sura 18 of the Koran. He is also identified in the popular imagination with St. George and the Prophet Elias, as well as the Zoroastrian hero Bahram (Fischer 1973 I:232), which has led to Kriss describing him as "the greatest and most remarkable example of Muslim syncretism" (1960 I:154 my translation). Khizr has at least two aspects. In the Sufi tradition he is believed to possess wisdom (hikma) and to know the 'greatest name' (al-ism al-a'zam) of Allah which confers saintship and the ability to perform supernatural feats. In Sufi thought he is regarded as symbolising "the inner light of wilāya (saintship) parallel to and contrasted with the apostolic-legalistic aspects of prophecy signified by Moses" (Trimingham 1971:158).

Secondly, Khizr is popularly believed to have drunk from the spring of life and thereby obtained immortality. He is sometimes seen in remote and holy places in the guise of a dignified old man with a grey beard and white clothing. Kriss (1960 I:154) regards him as a personification of spring and fertility and of the sea.⁴ In Afghanistan he is clearly identified with water, and it has been suggested that in him many spring and water spirits live on from the days before Islam. Many springs in Afghanistan are said to owe their origins to Khizr and are consecrated to him; their water is usually believed to be especially curative (Einzmann 1977:12). The most famous Khizr shrine in Afghanistan is the Cheshmeh Khizr, in the hills behind Kabul, which I mentioned in the last section. There are also Khizr shrines in Iran, for instance a cave near Yazd (Fischer 1973 I:234), and a fairly elaborate qadam gāh near Chahbahar in Iranian Baluchistan (Spooner 1963:89).

My second category of saints consists of relatives and descendants of the Prophet, who are often accorded especial reverence. I explained in the last chapter that the early Shi'ites believed that Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and his descendants, should have inherited both Muhammad's political functions as leader of the Islamic community and his religious

(footnote⁴: It may not be entirely coincidental that in Arabic script Khizr is spelt in the same way as the Arabic word for green, khazir, and that the pronunciation is almost identical (Steingass 1972).)

authority. Subsequently, as we shall see below, the Twelver Shi'ites in particular pushed the political implications of this belief into the background and emphasized its soteriological significance. For them, the most important of Muhammad's descendants are the twelve Imams and, with the exception of the twelfth Imam who did not die but went into 'occultation', their tombs are the most sacred places of Shi'ite pilgrimage. The place where the twelfth Imam is believed to have disappeared is also visited by pilgrims.

The only one of the Imams to have been buried in Iran was the eighth Imam, Ali Reza, and his tomb at Mashad in the north-east is undoubtedly the most important shrine in the country (see e.g. D.M. Donaldson 1933: 169-87, B.A. Donaldson 1938:62-8, Thaiss 1973:174-5). The second most popular shrine in Iran, at Qom, is built around the tomb of Fatimeh al-Massoumeh, the sister of the Imam Reza (Bazin 1973:78, Fischer 1980:106-8). Among the other important shrines of this kind are those of Ahmad ibn Musa, brother of the Imam Reza, in Shiraz, which is known as Shah Cheragh ('king of light'), and of Shah Abdul Azim, supposedly a great-great-grandson of the second Imam, Hasan, at Rayy just outside Tehran (Yann 1980:86). Smaller imāmzādas (as we saw above the term is used to refer both to a relative or descendant of an Imam and the place where he is buried) are to be found in or near practically every Shi'ite town and village in Iran (see e.g. Alberts 1963:878-91, Spooner 1963:87, Brooks 1981:13-4).

As is only to be expected shrines connected with Imams and imāmzādas are not so common in predominantly Sunni Afghanistan. However, Ali is greatly venerated by Afghan Sunnis as well as Shi'ites, and his supposed tomb at Mazar-i-Sharif is the most important shrine in Afghanistan today (see e.g. Yate 1888:179-81, N.H. Dupree 1967:48-56, Einzmann 1977:90-3, Adamec 1979:411-3). In complete contrast, the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi, a nazar gāh of Ali, and one of the most important shrines in Kabul, seems to be patronised almost entirely by Shi'ites. Another important Shi'ite shrine in Kabul is also a nazar gāh, this time of the Imam Husain's half-brother, Abbas, renowned as Husain's truest friend and comrade in arms (D.M. Donaldson 1933:95, Einzmann 1977:152-3).

To some extent Sunnis shared this belief that descent from the Prophet conferred some degree of sanctity. We saw in the previous chapter that sayyids, supposed descendants of Muhammad through Fatima and Ali, were traditionally treated with respect and regarded as possessors of a degree of baraka (Hodgson 1974 II:452). Hence it is no surprise to find that a number of shrines in the Kabul area are said to be the graves of local sayyids. A typical example is the shrine of Baba Ji-i-Kalan, near Butkhak. The saint is reported to have been a sayyid from the village who led an exemplary religious life (Einzmann 1977:169-70).

The heroes of early Islam and the Islamic conquests, in particular the Companions of the Prophet,

comprise a third category of saints. A good example of a saint of this kind is the Prophet's companion, Tamim, whose supposed grave forms the main attraction of one of Kabul's most important shrines. Tamim, the spiritual leader who preceded the first Islamic army to Kabul, is traditionally believed to have been massacred with his companions one night on the orders of the Hindu ruler Ratbil Shah (Wolfe 1965:95, Einzmann 1977:196). Another important shrine of one of the heroes of early Islam in Kabul is that of Lais Ben-i-Qasam, said to have been the grandson of the Prophet's uncle, Abbas. The shrine is known today as Shah-i-do Shamshehah ('the king of the two swords'), a nickname said to have arisen because of his habit of fighting with two swords (Wolfe 1965:63, Einzmann 1977:145). Graves attributed to the early heroes of Islam appear to be less common in Iran. The seventeenth century theologian, Majlisi, who wrote a lengthy manual for Shi'ite pilgrims, the Gift for Pilgrims (Tuhfat al-Za'ir), did recommend that the pilgrimage salutation be made at the graves of Companions of the Prophet who had supported the Shi'ite cause. However these are mostly buried outside Iran, in Iraq and Saudi Arabia (D.M. Donaldson 1933:167-8).

Sufis and poets who expressed Sufi ideas in their verses form my fourth category of saints. Sufi saints range from the founder or transmitter of a Sufi rule and chain of initiation with an international following to the humble mystic who happens to settle down in a village and is adopted as its patron after his death. Shrines associated with Sufis are very common in

Afghanistan and there are a number in Iran too. At Bistam in eastern Iran for example is the mausoleum of the famous mystic Shaykh Abu Yazid Bistami (d. 874), the first of the "intoxicated Sufis", which is still a popular place of pilgrimage (Arberry 1950:54, Nagel 1973:314). The tomb of Shah Ni'matullah Wali, who founded the Ni'matullah Sufi order, outside Kirman is another popular shrine (English 1966:24, Trimingham 1971:101). The most famous Sufi tomb in Iran, however, is probably that of Sheikh Safi al-din (1249-1334), who claimed to be a descendant of the seventh Imam, in Ardebil. Safi al-din's descendant, Ismail (d. 1524) founded the Safavid dynasty which ruled Iran for the next two centuries. The Safavid rulers liked to draw attention to their descent from Safi al-din and the seventh Imam, and expended considerable sums of money on the tomb at Ardebil (Trimingham 1971:99-100, Morton 1974, 1975).

None of the Sufi tombs in Afghanistan appear ever to have enjoyed such lavish royal patronage but there are a number of popular shrines whose principal attraction is the tomb of a famous Sufi. In Kabul, for instance, is the well known shrine of Ashuqan-i-Arifan (the 'lover', in the mystical sense, and the 'gnostic'). These two are reckoned to be grandsons of the famous Sufi poet, Abdullah-i-Ansari, who is buried at Gazargah just outside Herat, and whose tomb is the centrepiece of a large shrine complex (Einzmann 1977:169). Ashuqan and Arifan are said to have been famous Sufis in their own right and to have been attached to the court of the Ghaznavid ruler Bahram Shah (reigned 1118-1152). Today

they are looked upon as "the protectors of the city and are responsible for its prosperity" (Wolfe 1965:124). The graves of Sufis who have died much more recently still exert a powerful attraction in Afghanistan. In the village of Onchi Bagh Banan, for example, outside Kabul, is the tomb of a Sufi from Ghazni who died in 1967 and whose grave was fitted up with care and expense by relatives and former pupils. It is now visited by people from the village who had very little to do with him when he was alive. Slowly a "private ziyārat" is becoming a proper neighbourhood shrine (Einzmann 1977:242-3).

Among the Sufi poets whose tombs have become the objects of pilgrimage, the most important is that of Ansari, who, I pointed out above, is buried outside Herat. The site of his house in the city itself is also venerated as a shrine (Wolfe 1966:26). The tombs of Jami, also in Herat, and Sana'i, in Ghazni, and the Ismaili poet, Nasir-i-Khusrau, at Yamgan in Badakhshan, are other Afghan examples of the graves of mystical poets which have become ziyārats (D.M. Donaldson 1933:168-9, Wolfe 1966:48-56, L. Dupree 1976:9, Wiebe 1980:106). Among the Sufi-inspired poets whose tombs have become places of pilgrimage in Iran are Hafiz in Shiraz, Attar in Nishapur and Pir Sharaf Shah in the Talesh region of north western Iran (Yann 1980:87, Bazin 1980:200).⁵

(footnote⁵: Shrines referred to by the title of sabz push are found in a number of places (see e.g. Bivar 1966:69, Nagel 1973:198, Einzmann 1977:185, 245). They are also likely to have Sufi origins, for sabz push 'he who wears green', has traditionally been an epithet for someone who lives at the highest possible spiritual level (Schimmel 1975:102).)

The 'ulamā, the scholars of the Sharia, the religious law, and the mullas, who at least in theory have some training in theology and religious law and are perhaps the nearest Muslim equivalent to the Christian clergyman, form my fifth category of saints. As I explain in chapter seven, at many points in Islamic history it is difficult to distinguish 'ulamā and mullas from Sufis. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the 'ulamā traditionally tried to understand exactly how Allah wanted men to live by means of painstaking analysis of the Koran and the hadīs, the Traditions of the Prophet, whereas the Sufis tried to approach Allah directly through fasting, trance and meditation. Hence 'ulamā tended to be less colourful characters than Sufis, and were rarely regarded as being able to perform miracles as signs of Allah's favour as were the Sufi awliyā'. They were therefore less likely to become the objects of a popular cult after their deaths, but it did happen in a number of cases, for example the great legal scholar al-Shafi'i (d. 820) whose grave mosque in Cairo is or was an important pilgrimage centre (Kriss 1960 I:60-1).

In the Shi'ite tradition it is said to be worth making a pilgrimage to the tombs of the great Shi'ite scholars and traditionists. Majlisi himself points out that many such figures are buried at Qom, such as Ibn Babawaihi (d. 991) who wrote one of the four standard collections of Shi'ite traditions, and recommends that pilgrims should visit their tombs (D.M. Donaldson 1933: 268-9). In eastern Iran a new building has been constructed over the old gravestone of the fifteenth

century religious scholar Muhammad ibn Hisham and this is reported to be developing into a shrine (Spooner 1963: 89). Shrines supposedly containing the mortal remains of religious scholars and mullas also occur in Afghanistan, and there are some in the Kabul area. The shrine of Baba-i-Kaidani, for instance, belongs to a mujtahid (a man who practises religious jurisprudence) who wrote many Koranic commentaries. Interestingly enough he had something of a reputation as a Sufi too. His shrine is visited frequently by mullas who ask blessing for their office (Einzmann 1977:150).

The sixth social role which in Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia (see e.g. Castagné 1951:96), but apparently not in Iran, can bestow a sacred quality upon its incumbent, albeit posthumously, is simply that of secular ruler. The fact that the tombs of secular rulers do not appear to have become shrines in Iran may have something to do with the Shi'ite ambivalence towards secular authority (see e.g. Arjomand 1979:106-9). The most important Afghan example is the tomb of Ahmad Shah Durrani in Kandahar; his mausoleum is frequently visited by the locals who "offer up prayers and implore the Shah for help" (Wiebe 1980:106, my translation). Another interesting example is Mahmud of Ghazni, whom we mentioned above in connection with the Cheshmeh Khizr in Kabul, whose tomb in Ghazni itself is regarded as a ziyarat (Byron 1981:170-1, Chatwind 1981:4).

The seventh category of saints is not so easy to define, but may be said to include folk heroes and saints whose historical basis is extremely tenuous and who appear to derive almost entirely from the world of myth and legend. Shrines of saints of this kind are still relatively common. An intriguing example is the Jawan Mard-i-Qasab (literally the 'brave young butcher') whose most famous shrine in Afghanistan is at Balkh. The butchers from nearby Mazar-i-Sharif gather there once a year and honour him as their patron saint. There are several other nazar gāhs of this saint in Afghanistan, who is said to have been a butcher who cut off some of his own flesh to feed a starving malang (Einzmann 1977: 13, 234-5 - Centlivres (1972:166) gives another version of the story). His origins are obscure; he may have Zoroastrian associations as well as Sufi ones.⁶

(footnote⁶: Snasarev (1977a:31) refers to this saint as Djoumard-kassab, the "patron of butchers", and says he is "probably the most interesting of the Khorezmian saints because of the archaic nature of his major characteristics". Snasarev suggests that the name derives from that of the Zoroastrian figure Gaiomard (the Gaia Maretan of the Avesta), who in ancient Iranian mythology was the first human being and was made out of earth at the same time as the first ox. The epithet jawān mard, 'brave youth' or 'virtuous young man' is also one which was used to describe the model Sufi, and occurs in many Sufi hagiographies (Schimmel 1975:246, 426).)

The name Malek-i-Azhdahar ('king dragon'), which is applied to various shrines in Afghanistan (see p.45) and Soviet Central Asia, recalls the legendary fire-breathing dragon of folk tradition. It has been suggested that this image originated in the Avesta's Azhi-Dakhaka, an incarnation of the Zoroastrian divinity of evil, Angra Mainyu (Snesarev 1977a:29-37). Nowadays Malek-i-Azhdahar is said either to have been a Muslim who died converting infidels to Islam or to have been an infidel converted to Islam by Ali (see e.g. Olufsen 1911: 569, Castagné 1951:88). The existence of tales of this kind certainly supports V. and E. Turner's suggestion, made in connection with a discussion of the story of St. Patrick's killing of a monster in Lough Derg in the form of a snake, eel or dragon, that "tales of this mythemic type, saint overcoming serpent or fiend, often refer to the displacement of one religious tradition by another" (1978:123). A Zoroastrian association may be suspected in the case of some other shrines too, such as Shah Taous in Kabul (Einzmann 1977:176). Taous ('peacock') was one of the sons of Gaiomard, the first human being according to ancient Iranian mythology.

The origins of some other folk saints are wholly shrouded in mystery, in particular the 'bride and bridegroom', with whom a few shrines in the Kabul area are associated. Most of these resemble simple graves, but one of them has a five foot high column, said to represent the bride, which stands on a tomb like structure, representing the bridegroom (Einzmann 1977:187-8). In this case the story is that the bride and groom had

just solemnised their marriage at the shrine (whose principal attraction is the tomb of a Sufi known as Khaja Musafer) when news came that enemy soldiers were approaching. Lest they fall alive into their hands, the bride prayed that she and her husband might die; her wish was immediately granted, and they were turned into stone. In the case of the other shrines, the bride and groom are said to have just left their wedding celebrations, and to have fallen into the hands of unbelievers and been killed (Einzmann 1977:174, 223).

The principal characteristic of another group of folk saints consists in their numbers, with forty predominating both in Afghanistan and Iran. In the Kabul area for example there is the shrine of the Chehel Tan-i-Pak (the 'forty pure ones'), and the shrine of the Chehel Dukhtaran (the 'forty maidens') which I mentioned earlier (Einzmann 1977:224, 229). Shrines of the forty maidens occur in Iran too, for instance the Chehel Dukhtaran near Yazd where forty daughters of one of the Imams are said to have been killed and thrown down a well (Fischer 1973 I:217). The number forty of course has many Biblical associations (e.g. Genesis 7:4); Christ for example spent forty days and nights in the desert (Matthew 4:2-3), and presumably in imitation of this Sufis used to spend forty days in retreat. The numbers seven and fourteen also occur quite often in connection with shrines, in the case of the cave of the Seven Sleepers in northern Afghanistan for example, and the shrine of the Chaharda Ma'sum (the 'fourteen pure or innocent ones') in Kabul (Yate 1888: 348, Einzmann 1977:173, see also Canaan 1927:289-90, Schimmel 1975:202).

Another kind of folk saint common in Afghanistan but apparently not in Iran is similar to the sort of Central Asian saint described by Snedarev, about whom little or nothing is known, and who is known simply by "lakab nicknames such as Gohib-bobo (the hidden one), Chinar-bobo (the plane tree), Kechirmas-bobo (the unforgiving)" (1977a:15). It should be pointed out here that bōbō, which is the same as the Afghan bābā, in fact means 'father' or 'grandfather', so that Chinar-bobo, for example, is better translated as 'venerable' or 'father' plane tree. At any rate, the point to note is that many saints of this kind are found in Afghanistan such as Khaja Chinar in the hills south of Mazar-i-Sharif, and Chinar Baba and Ghaibi Baba in the Kabul area (Poulton 1979 II:220, Einzmann 1977:289-90, 226-7). In this connection it is worth mentioning Goldziher's (1971 II: 318) suggestion that purely linguistic processes have helped to create saints. He cites the example of an old olive tree at a street corner in Damascus especially venerated by women, in which a saint named Sitti Zaytun (the holy woman Zaytun) is said to live; "the olive tree became a person by the name of 'olive tree'. The sacred tree became an individual; zaytun became Zaytun" (see also Kriss 1960 I:214). This example recalls Max Muller's (1861:11) idea that "much of what we now call mythology was in truth a disease ... of language".

My eighth category of saints includes people of purely local renown in their lifetimes, often not for religious reasons at all, whose graves have subsequently become the objects of local cults. These are like the

saints to whom Spooner refers in connection with his sixth category of shrines, that is "comparatively recent and presumably historical persons who had commanded unusual respect in their own communities" (1963:90).

Saints of this kind in the Kabul area, for example, include Zaman Khan, a powerful khān who possessed the religious learning of a mawlawī, and Mir Sayyid Ahmad Agha, said to have been a sayyid and an ancestor of the people living in the village in which his grave lies (Einzmann 1977:140-1, 291).

The ninth and final category, and one into which many saints fall, is made up of Ghazis and shahadā (pl. of shahīd, martyr or witness), especially the latter. The graves of Ghazis and shahadā do not automatically become shrines, but they should always be respected and are likely to do so. The Ghazi is a warrior who fights against infidels, while a shahīd is a martyr for the faith (Trimingham 1971 glossary). In Afghanistan at any rate the term shahīd is used for people who cannot be said to have died for Islam at all. In Kabul for instance almost anyone who dies in unusual circumstances can be described as a shahīd (Einzmann 1977:20), while in the Sar-i-Pul area in the north of Afghanistan the present day shahīd is usually someone thought to have been killed unjustly (Tapper, personal communication, see also Barth 1965:58, Wutt 1981:97).

It is worth noting that shahadā are still being created and that their graves are still being turned into proper ziyārats. A good example is the grave of Azim Jan

in Kabul. A seventeen year old schoolboy, he fell in love with his cousin whom he met on the way to school, and was murdered by her father. Prayers and requests for help are made at his grave, rags have been tied to it and candles and small offerings are left there. "At this grave", Einzmann comments "the transition from the grave of a shahīd to a ziyārat, though one with purely local significance, is perceptible" (1977:158-9, my translation). The same is happening in other cases, for example the grave of shahīd Sami, another schoolboy who was killed in a road accident (Einzmann 1977:224, see also 180).

In these cases it seems to be not just the violent manner of the death of the occupant which gives a grave of this kind its special sanctity, but also its inappropriateness, that it to say, the fact that the victims were youths with their adult lives before them. It is interesting therefore to note that one of the handful of shrines in the Kabul area consecrated to a woman, Bemaru or Bibi Mahru ('moon faced lady'), also belongs to someone who is supposed to have died in her youth. Betrothed to a man who went off to war and was reported to have been killed, Bibi Mahru died of sorrow. In fact he had only been wounded, and when he returned home he placed a white stone over Bibi Mahru's grave and remained faithful to her memory (Wolfe 1965:120, Einzmann 1977: 135). The same is true of the poetess Rabi'a Balkhi in Balkh. She fell in love with a slave, and when her brother found out he threw her into a dungeon where she slashed her wrists and died. The dungeon which became

her tomb was only discovered in 1964. "Scholars may look askance at the newly designated shrine, questioning its authenticity", N.H. Dupree (1971:295) notes, "but young girls come to ask the poetess for inspiration in solving their own romantic problems, tying strips of cloth to the bars through which one views the tomb in order to remind her of their requests".

d. levels of shrines according to catchment area:-

I conclude this chapter by briefly outlining a second classification of Islamic shrines in Iran and Afghanistan, the main criterion in this case being the distances over which they attract pilgrims. V. and E. Turner (1978:237-9) have identified four levels of Roman Catholic shrines. These are, firstly, "international", for example Jerusalem, Rome, Lourdes, and Guadalupe in Mexico, secondly, "national", such as Our Lady of Knock in the west of Ireland, Our Lady of the Pilar in Spain and Our Lady of Czestoshowa in Poland, thirdly, "regional", for example Our Lady of Ocotlan in Tlaxcala state in Mexico, and fourthly "intervillage", for example the local shrines in the Nansa valley in northern Spain (Christian 1972:78). Bhardwaj (1973:146) has produced a similar classification of Hindu shrines in India, but with six levels, pan-Hindu, supraregional, regional, sub-regional (high) and subregional (low) and local.

In order to classify Islamic shrines in this way, it is useful to think in terms of five levels. To begin with, the only shrines which draw pilgrims from

across the whole Islamic world, both Shi'ite and Sunni, are Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, and these may be referred to as "pan-Islamic". With these exceptions there are no universal Sunni shrines (Trimingham 1971: 234). By contrast the most famous Shi'ite shrines, in particular the sanctuaries of southern Iraq such as the tombs of Husain at Kerbela and Ali at Najaf (known collectively as the 'atabāt), are visited by Shi'ites from all over the Islamic world but are not patronised by Sunnis. We therefore need a separate sub-class of "pan-Shi'ite" shrines for the Shi'ite sanctuaries in Iraq and the shrine of the Imam Reza at Mashad in Iran. As well as attracting many Iranians, Mashad draws Shi'ite Hazara and Qizilbash pilgrims from Afghanistan and large numbers of Shi'ites from the Indian sub-continent (Nagel 1973: 319). The number of visitors to the shrine each year is probably somewhere between the figure of two million given by the Mashad Chamber of Commerce (Bazin 1973:87), and half a million, given by the Tehran Journal (Thaiss 1973:174). During the major festivals as many as a hundred thousand pilgrims may gather in the town.⁷

A second level of shrines may be described as a "national" one, and includes those which attract pilgrims from a whole country. The principal Iranian and

(footnote⁷: the tomb of the Ismaili or "severer" Shi'ite poet Nasir-i-Khusrau at Yamgan in Badakhshan attracts pilgrims from Pakistan and India as well as Afghanistan and may be described as a "pan-Ismaili" shrine (L. Dupree 1976:13-7).)

Afghan examples are the tomb of the Imam Reza's sister, Fatimeh, at Qom in Iran, and the supposed tomb of Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan. According to the administration of the sanctuary Qom receives as many as a million pilgrims a year; they come from every part of Iran but foreign visitors are rare (Bazin 1973:87-8). No figures could be obtained for the number of pilgrims to the shrine at Mazar-i-Sharif, but it is likely to be at least half a million a year of whom the vast majority are Afghans. A third level of shrine may be referred to as "regional", drawing pilgrims predominantly from one area alone. As no figures are available for the numbers and provenance of the pilgrims who visit this and the lower levels of shrines, the ranking from now on is a provisional one. Not surprisingly, examples of "regional" shrines are more numerous than the "pan-Islamic" and "national" ones. Afghan examples include the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul, the shrine of the Prophet's mantle in Kandahar and the shrines of Imam Sahib near Kunduz, Imam Baqir at Maimana, Ofian Sahib near Charikar and Ansari at Gazargah outside Herat. Among the Iranian examples are the shrine of Shah Cheragh in Shiraz, Abdul Azim, and perhaps Bibi Shahrbanu, at Rayy, the Imamzada Jafar in Yazd and Ni'matullah Wali at Mahan not far from Kirman.

Fourthly, there is a level which may be described as that of "district" shrines. Though they do not draw pilgrims from such a wide area as the "regional" ones, such shrines are still better known and frequented than the purely "local" ones. Examples of "district" shrines in the Kabul area include Ashuqan and Arifan,

Cheshmeh Khizr, and the cave of the Chehel Tan-i-Pak. In Afghanistan as a whole the tomb of Ahmad Shah Durrani in Kandahar, as well as the shrine of Shah Maqsud in the hills to the northwest of the city, and the cave of the Seven Sleepers near Maimana in the north of the country, probably fall into the category of district rather regional shrines. Iranian examples are the Imamzada Ali Akbar in the bakhsh of Garmsar in Tehran province (Alberts 1963:878), the shrine of the Imam Reza's brother Sultan Muhammad at Kakhk in Khurasan and the tomb of Cyrus, known locally as the tomb of Solomon's mother, at Pasargadae (Spooner 1963:87-8).

Finally, there is a level of purely "local" shrine, patronage of which is restricted almost entirely to the inhabitants of one or two nearby villages, or a village section, urban quarter or neighbourhood. Einzmann describes a large number of shrines of this kind in the city of Kabul and its environs, such as Chinar Baba which I mentioned earlier (1977:226-7). A typical urban example is the shrine simply known as shahīd which lies behind an apartment block in the development built under Soviet auspices in Kabul, the Mikroyan, which is known "only in the immediate neighbourhood" (Einzmann 1977:151 my translation). Examples from Iran are the small shrine at Baimurgh in Khurasan dedicated to the Imam Reza (Spooner 1963:87), and the shrine known as Shahzada Husain not far from one of the villages in the Shiraz area inhabited by a section of the Mamasani tribe (Susan Wright, personal communication).

If we now compare this classification, based on the distances over which shrines draw pilgrims, with the one outlined in the first section, which was based on their principal sources of attraction and the saints associated with them, two points stand out clearly. In the first place, the more important shrines are associated with men rather than women, with only two exceptions, both Iranian, Fatimeh's tomb at Qom and Bibi Shahrbanu's sanctuary at Rayy. Presumably this reflects the male domination of the Islamic tradition in general, and in particular of Afghan and perhaps to a slightly lesser extent Iranian society and culture. The fact that in spite of this Iran's second most important shrine is a woman's tomb must on the other hand be partly due to the reverence with which Shi'ites regard the twelve Imams and their relatives, whether male or female. In predominantly Sunni Afghanistan, descent from the Prophet is not so highly esteemed, certainly not sufficiently to overcome male prejudice.

Secondly, with the exception of a few nazar gāhs, qadam gāhs and shrines housing relics, the upper levels of shrine in both Afghanistan and Iran, that is the pan-Shi'ite, national and regional shrines, consist of real or supposed tombs. Their occupants are almost always said to be close relatives of the Prophet or his not too distant descendants, his Companions, heroes of the early Islamic conquests or prominent Sufis. In other words, they come from the second, third and fourth of the nine categories of saint outlined above. By contrast, while a large number of the district and local shrines

also consist of tombs, a significant proportion are 'natural' shrines, sacred springs, trees, rocks and mountains. The saints associated with the district and local shrines are ordinary Sufis, people of some local reputation during their lifetimes, folk heroes, shahadā, and, occasionally, 'ulamā, as well as, in the Iranian case in particular, more distant descendants of the Prophet. This means that, with the exception of the 'ulamā, there is a tendency for these shrines to be associated with figures whose Islamic credentials are less than impeccable, whereas on the whole the Islamic character of the upper levels of shrine is more pronounced. One reason for this may simply be that since these shrines are much better known, it has been easier for the 'ulamā to exercise some degree of control over the beliefs and practices associated with them. It may also be the case that because of their strong associations with the founders of Islam, these shrines have been regarded as the more powerful sources of baraka, and hence have been visited more often, in the process attracting wealthy patrons who have lent them further prestige.

Summary:-

I began by briefly examining the simple classifications of Islamic shrines in Iran and Afghanistan put forward by Spooner and L. Dupree. I argued that something more comprehensive was needed in order to take proper account of the range of things and places which have become the principal attractions of these shrines,

and the variety of saints associated with them. As far as concerns the former, I distinguished between natural and man-made shrines. Among the natural shrines were rocks, caves, springs and wells, trees and mountain peaks and unusual rock formations. The great majority of these were qadam gāhs or nazar gāhs, places associated with saints in various ways. Man-made shrines consisted largely of the supposed tombs of saints, more rarely of their relics and of qadam gāhs and nazar gāhs. We saw that there was nothing to prevent a shrine from possessing more than one of these attractions. A good example is the ziyārat of the Chehel Tan-i-Pak, which, as we saw above, consists of a cave which contains a large wooden box in which are bones said to be those of the men from whom the shrine takes its name. Thus it combines a cave with relics.

I went on to distinguish nine social or religious roles the performance of which has in Islamic Iran and Afghanistan posthumously conferred a sacred quality upon their incumbents. One of them, that of the shahīd or 'martyr', appeared to derive its sacredness largely from the fact of violent death, though other factors such as the age of the victim may also play a part. The other roles were those of Biblical-Koranic figures, relatives and descendants of the Prophet, heroes of early Islam, Sufis and Sufi-inspired poets, ulamā, secular ruler, folk heroes of various kinds, and people of local renown. These roles are not mutually exclusive and it often happens that a saint has played more than one of them. The eighth Imam, Ali Reza, who is buried at Mashad, is a

good example. Not only was he a descendant of the Prophet, but Shi'ites also believe that he was murdered by poison (D.M. Donaldson 1933:168-9). He is thus thought of as a shahīd as well. By means of this dual classification in terms both of the type of saint associated with them and the kind of object which is their principal raison d'être, it should in theory be possible to identify seventy-two different types of shrine. Without claiming that there would be much profit in doing so, I nevertheless suggested that a classificatory scheme of this kind may give a much better idea of the variety of Islamic shrines to be found in Iran and Afghanistan than the rudimentary classifications into five or six types offered by Spooner and Dupree.

I went on briefly to outline a second classification of these shrines in terms of the catchment areas from which they drew pilgrims. Following Bhardwaj (1973) and V. and E. Turner's (1978) work on Hindu and Roman Catholic shrines, I suggested that it made sense to think in terms of five levels of shrine in the Muslim world, pan-Islamic (including pan-Shi'ite and pan-Ismaili), national, regional, district and local. I drew particular attention to the pan-Shi'ite shrine built around the Imam Reza's tomb at Mashad in eastern Iran, and to the national shrines built around the tomb of the Imam Reza's sister Fatimeh at Qom in western Iran, and the supposed tomb of Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan. All three shrines attract between half a million and a million visitors a year. I concluded by noting that the main attraction of the pan-Shi'ite,

national and regional shrines is usually the supposed tomb of a close relative or immediate descendant of the Prophet, one of his companions, a hero of the early Islamic conquests or a prominent Sufi. I contrasted this with the district and local shrines which are much more likely to consist of natural features, and to be associated with ordinary Sufis, people of some local repute, folk heroes of various kinds, shahadā, ‘ulamā, and, particularly in Iran, more distant descendants of the Prophet. In view of this I suggested that the upper levels of shrine were markedly more Islamic in character than were the lower ones.

Chapter Three Control, Administration and Amenities of Shrines

"I bear witness that you are indeed the Imams, who indicate the true way, the ones who have found Guidance, who are sinless, the Noble, the Near to God, the Pious, the Upright, the Elect, the Obedient to God, who are firm adherents to His commands" (extract from prayer for the use of pilgrims to the shrines of any of the Imams - D.M. Donaldson 1933:348).

In this chapter I begin by discussing in general terms the questions of the control and administration of shrines in Iran and Afghanistan. I go on to draw particular attention to the way in which the Safavid Shahs built up the prestige of some of the Iranian shrines in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the reasons for this. In conclusion I describe the kinds of attractions and amenities shrines may possess in addition to the tomb, relic, nazar gāh or qadam gāh which is the reason for their existence in the first place.

a. control and administration of shrines:-

Traditionally one way to win the favour of a saint which was open to anyone with property was to endow his shrine with some of it. Such property was held in trust for the shrine and in theory at least was not subject to the usual taxes and could not be confiscated by the ruler as could land held by individuals (Lambton

1953:27, 104). Property held on these terms was known as vaqf (pl. awqāf), and mosques and madrassas (religious colleges) as well as shrines were often endowed with it¹. By the twelfth century there was a considerable amount of vaqf property in Iran. However, the greatest patrons of the Iranian shrines were undoubtedly the Safavid Shahs who endowed the shrines of the Imam Reza at Mashad and his sister Fatimeh Massoumeh at Qom in particular with very extensive properties (Lambton 1953:112).

Though the amount of vaqf property attached to shrines was greatly reduced during the troubled years between the fall of the Safavid dynasty and the assumption of the throne by the Qajars in the late eighteenth century, some of them managed to hang on to large landholdings and have done so to this day (Lambton 1953:132). The endowments attached to the shrine at Qom, for instance, consist of shops, garages and bath houses, from which it draws rent, and of six whole villages and a part ranging from one-sixth to three-quarters of a number of others. Total revenue from these properties is reported to have been in the region of 25 million rials (approximately £166,000) in 1969 (Bazin 1973:93). While by no means an inconsiderable sum it is negligible in comparison with the revenues derived from the awqāf belonging to

(footnote¹: The Islamic jurists also recognised personal awqāf, that is property placed in trust for the settlor's descendants, but there was always some doubt as to the legitimacy of these (Lambton 1953:230-1).)

the shrine at Mashad, which in 1969 amounted to about 500 million rials (well over three million pounds) (ibid). This shrine owned property throughout Iran, and was one of the largest landowners in the eastern province of Khurasan in which it is situated (Lambton 1953:235). It may well still be so as charitable awqāf were excluded from the provisions of the Iranian land reform law of January the 9th, 1962. In January 1963 it was proposed that charitable awqāf might be let to the peasants cultivating them for a cash rent for 99 years, but the opposition of the 'ulamā helped to defeat the measure (and the others which accompanied it) (Lambton 1969:106-8).

In the last resort the duty of ensuring that the revenue from the awqāf of a shrine was not misspent by its administrator (mutawallī) lay with the secular ruler. This gave him the right to dismiss an administrator who was abusing his position and to appoint someone else in his place. Thus the Seljuq rulers (1055-1157), for example, supervised awqāf in keeping with a general policy of bringing religious institutions under the state's control. In particular, Sultan Sanjar (reigned 1097-1157) placed the administrators of awqāf under the jurisdiction of his provincial governors who were supposed to supervise expenditure of the income from endowments and also ensure that their condition and administration were kept up to the mark (Lambton 1953: 67). In practice, however, secular rulers did not often interfere with the administration of shrines, and the position of mutawallī of a shrine was frequently handed down within the same family for generations (L. Dupree

1976:4, 11, Einzmann 1977:107, 116). Since under Islamic law the mutawallī of an endowment was entitled to draw ten per cent of the income from it, such positions tended to be much prized (Fischer 1980:114).

The Safavid kings, who ruled Iran and a large part of what is now Afghanistan from the late fifteenth until the early eighteenth centuries took a more direct interest in shrines than had most of their predecessors. In particular they patronised shrines connected with the Imams and imāmzādas who, as I shall show below, came in this period to play a more central role than ever before in Shi'ite piety. In the first place, as we noted above, they endowed many of these shrines with large amounts of land and other revenue-producing property. Secondly, they contributed lavishly to their restoration and refurbishment, providing them with new amenities such as the hospital for pilgrims at Qom and the dār al-hadīs (in which instruction in the Traditions of the Prophet took place) at Ardebil (Morton 1975:39, Fischer 1980:107-8).

However, they particularly favoured the shrine of the Imam Reza at Mashad which was the only tomb of an Imam on Iranian territory. Not only was a great deal more vaqf property created for it than for any of the other shrines, but the title of 'mashadi' was officially accorded to anyone who visited it (Yann 1980:84-5). In 1601 Shah Abbas the Great went so far as to show his respect for and attachment to the shrine by walking to it from his capital at Isfahan and trimming the thousands of candles which illuminated it (Sykes 1910:272,

D.M. Donaldson 1933:176-7). As they had a naqqāra khāna (literally 'kettledrum house') set up at the shrine at Ardebil, in which small groups of musicians performed, it may well have been the Safavids who were responsible for establishing one at Mashad. Playing kettledrums and various wind instruments at certain times of the day has traditionally been regarded in Iran as a symbol of royal power. Hence, Morton (1975:54) suggests, music of this kind may have been played at a few shrines in recognition of their spiritual power. It seems likely that it was also a privilege granted to a shrine by the Shah which symbolised the close connection between them.

The special position of Mashad in the hierarchy of Iranian shrines can be seen in the way the Safavid and, in the nineteenth century, the Qajar Shahs took a more direct interest in its administration than in that of the country's other well-known shrines. Traditionally the reigning Shah automatically became the mutawallī of the shrine at Mashad upon his accession, and appointed a deputy, known as the mutawallī bāshī, to manage it for him (D.M. Donaldson 1933:134)². Similarly, the reigning Shah was the mutawallī of the shrines of Sheikh Safi al-din at Ardebil, Abdul Azim at Rayy and Fatimeh Massoumeh

(footnote²: According to D.M. Donaldson (1933:134), the mutawallī bāshī was assisted by a nā'ib al-tawliya who had to be a lineal descendant of the Imam Reza himself. Morton (1974:34), however, suggests that nā'ib al-tawliya was the title of the man appointed by the Shah to manage the shrine at Mashad for him)

at Qom. However, Shah Tahmasp (reigned 1524-76) appointed one of three brothers to manage each of these shrines, and their descendants continued to do so until 1965 when they were removed by the late Shah Muhammad Reza (Morton 1974:34, Fischer 1980:108). By contrast there appears to have been much less continuity in the administration of the shrine at Mashad; in 1889, for example, the office of mutawallī bāshī was combined with that of governor of the province of which Mashad was the capital (Yann 1980:66-7).

There were two main reasons for the Safavid patronage of Iranian shrines. In the first place, they simply wanted to dissuade their subjects from going on pilgrimage to the shrines of the 'atabāt to enrich their enemies the Ottoman Turks (Bazin 1973:84, Yann 1980:84-5). Hence they were anxious to increase the prestige of the Iranian shrines, extending, decorating and embellishing them in order to make them as impressive as possible. In terms of the classification set out at the end of chapter two, they wanted to undermine the pan-Shi'ite status of the shrines in Ottoman territory and make Mashad in particular into a national if not a pan-Shi'ite shrine themselves.

The other reason for the Safavids' patronage of shrines was that it lent support to a new emphasis which the Safavids appear to have encouraged in Shi'ite doctrine upon the intercessionary role of the Imams and imāmzādas. Shah Ismail, the first Safavid ruler (reigned 1501-1524), had come to power as leader of a chiliastic

movement of Turkmen tribesmen. Ismail presented himself to them as the 'introduction' to the reign of the Twelfth Imam, the Imam al-Mahdi, who will one day return to bring about the final triumph of truth and justice, or even as the Twelfth Imam himself. His successors were naturally anxious to reduce the risk of anyone else raising support for an attempt on their throne by taking on this role himself, and they encouraged the 'ulamā to play down the political significance of the doctrine of the Imamate. This suited the 'ulamā too for they regarded themselves as the proper representatives of the Twelfth Imam. Eschatology was therefore made "the cornerstone of orthodox religiosity", and the Imams were cast in the role of other-worldly saviours and intercessors (Arjomand 1979: 93). Thus the theologian Majlisi, for instance, wrote that "the Imams are the mediators between God and Mankind. Except by their intercession it is impossible for men to avoid the punishment of God" (D.M. Donaldson 1933: 344).

The best way of soliciting the Imams' powers of intercession, Majlisi said, was to visit their shrines and recite special prayers (ziyārat nāmas) at them (D.M. Donaldson op. cit., Spooner 1963:87). As a result, "pilgrimage to shrines, which had been recommended by the early Imami (Shi'ite) theologians but which had not been given inordinate importance, became a major feature of Persian Shi'ism" (Arjomand 1979:94). By patronising the shrines of the Imam Reza, his sister Fatimeh and the imāmzādas, the Safavids drew attention to the desirability of obtaining their intercession through

pilgrimage and encouraged their subjects' faith in it³.

Ultimate authority over the more popular shrines thus lay with the secular rulers, though even the Safavids did not interfere greatly in their affairs. However, from the late nineteenth century both the Iranian and the Afghan governments began trying to exercise considerably more control over the shrines and in particular their endowments. This was part of a wider effort to eliminate or at least reduce the influence enjoyed by religious leaders and was accompanied by other measures designed to increase the state's direct control over its subjects (see e.g. Fischer 1980:108). Following the Constitutional Revolution in Iran in 1906, laws were passed in 1907 and 1911 making all schools, including the religious ones, subject to the Ministry of Education, and in 1911 a joint Ministry of Education and Endowments (awqāf) was created. The determination of Reza Shah (reigned 1925-41) in particular to bring the shrines and the religious establishment under his control was dramatically symbolised by an incident at Qom in the late 1920's (there is some doubt as to the exact date). One

(footnote³: The Safavids were, as we have already seen, also great patrons of the tomb of their ancestor, the Sufi pīr Safi al-din (d. 1334) at Ardebil. Through him they claimed descent from the seventh Imam, Musa Kazim. This clashed with the emphasis on the other-worldly significance they otherwise tried to attach to the Imamate, since though they abandoned Ismail's claim to Mahdihood the Safavids continued to stress that their descent from the Imams gave their rule added legitimacy (Arjomand 1979:101).)

of the ayātullāhs in Qom reproved some of the Shah's female relatives for entering the shrine unveiled. The Shah's chief military aide is said to have violated the sanctuary of the shrine by marching in wearing his boots and dragging the ayātullāh out "by his beard". He took him before the Shah who kicked him and struck him with his whip before sending him into exile (Mortimer 1982:309, see also Akhavi 1980:42 and Fischer 1980:129).

From 1934 state supervision of religious endowments is said to have become stricter. All awqāf which had no administrator were placed under the direct control of the Ministry of Education and Endowments, and the Ministry was empowered to exercise "full supervision" over all public endowments irrespective of the status of their administration (Lambton 1953:233, Akhavi 1980:56-7). In the following year Reza Shah's determination to assert his control over the religious classes was brutally demonstrated in another incident, this time at the shrine at Mashad. In 1935 he decreed that Iranians could only wear European-style headgear, and attempts by the local police to enforce the new law inside the shrine led to disturbances in which hundreds of people were killed or injured (Mortimer 1982:310).

In 1964 a separate Office of Endowments was created, independent of the Ministry of Education. Two years later it was decided that some awqāf could be administered by hay'at-i-amīnā ('councils of honest men') consisting of from three to twelve persons acceptable to the local mayor. The shrine of Shah Cheragh in Shiraz, for instance, was administered under such an arrangement

during the 1970's (Fischer 1980:115). This too was part of the continuing efforts on the part of the late Shah to reduce the power of the traditional religious establishment. In particular, as noted above, in 1965 nominees of the Shah took over the office of mutawallī at the shrines at Qom, Ardebil and Rayy, positions which had been inherited within the same families since the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1968 a new lattice-work grill around the tomb of Fatimeh at Qom was unveiled by the queen, and a new "dusting-off" ceremony was introduced. This involved the annual opening of the grill and counting of the contributions left by pilgrims⁴. "The shrine was thus rejuvenated ceremonially as a state-linked religious centre, as well as being reorganised administratively" (Fischer 1980:116-7).

Over the last century an analogous process has been taking place in Afghanistan; in fact it may even have gone further. In 1896 Amir Abd al-Rahman (reigned 1880-1901) took control of the majority of vaqf properties. Like the Shahs of Iran, his aim was to destroy the economic self-sufficiency of the religious establishment and reduce the religious classes to state employees dependent upon his treasury (Gregorian 1969:135, L. Dupree 1973:108). Since then the government has assumed the prerogative of appointing the staff of awqāf, maintaining the major mosques and paying the salaries of

(footnote⁴: A similar ceremony has been performed at Mashad and the shrines of the 'atabāt for centuries (D.M. Donaldson 1933:98-9, Yann 1980:85).)

the officials out of vaqf funds (Gregorian 1969:319). Nevertheless, it is not clear how much control it exercised over the shrines themselves. Most of the more popular ones appear to have been looked after either by a family or a lineage; as in Iran some of them have been in the same family's hands for hundreds of years (L. Dupree 1976:4).

However, in 1970 a new Awqaf Law was promulgated. The Riyasat-i-Ali Awqaf (the Department of Endowments) was charged with the "protection, upkeep, repair and construction of endowed buildings and holy places; administering and organisation of endowed properties" (L. Dupree 1976:22). In theory at least it now administers all religious bequests whether these are whole properties or items such as individual fruit trees. It also looks after mosques, madrassas and shrines. In the early seventies it began drawing up an inventory of the latter, beginning in the urban areas. It has begun to install its own collecting boxes for donations at the larger shrines, and in some cases to replace the incumbent keepers with its own employees, usually poor relations of its own officials (Einzmann 1977:80-1, 179).

I drew attention above to the reasons for Safavid patronage of some of the Iranian shrines. Mazar-i-Sharif is an Afghan shrine which may well owe some of its popularity today to royal patronage. In the late nineteenth century the Afghan ruler, Abd al-Rahman, consolidated the modern Afghan state. In doing so he fought a bitter war with the Shi'ite Hazaras in central

Afghanistan. Following this he was anxious to prevent them from going on pilgrimage to Mashad as they had traditionally done, since this brought them under the influence of the Persian 'ulamā (Kakar 1979:159). The Afghan rulers needed a national shrine every bit as much as had the Safavids in sixteenth century Iran. Since the Hindu Kush mountains had traditionally made travel between northern and southern Afghanistan dangerous and time-consuming, a prerequisite for turning Mazar-i-Sharif into such a shrine was the arrival of modern means of transport and the opening of the first motorable road across the mountains in the 1930's (L. Dupree 1973:461). However, the decisive factor may well have been the support given by the Afghan government to the shrine and in particular its sponsorship of the janda bālā kardan ceremony (see chapter five). By doing its best to enhance the prestige of Mazar-i-Sharif as a religious centre, the government hoped to discourage its Shi'ite subjects from visiting Mashad, as well as providing a symbol and a focus for the loyalty of Afghans as a whole.

As far as concerns the actual running of the shrines, the famous ones traditionally had large numbers of attendants. At Mashad, for example, as well as the mutawallī bāshī, there were six or seven officials with executive or clerical duties who received regular salaries and various perquisites. Until Reza Shah reduced their numbers by two-thirds, there are reported to have been as many as 1,700 doorkeepers (darbān/singular) and attendants (khādim/singular) on the shrine's payroll. The positions were hereditary ones; at Qom too

whole families of attendants had hereditary positions in the shrine administration which dated back at least as far as Safavid times (Fischer 1980:117). The shrine at Mashad also had more specialised employees as well, such as the musicians who sat in the naqqāra khāna and marked dawn and sunset with their playing and apparently still do so (Morton 1975:34). They also played to celebrate a particularly dramatic cure (B.A. Donaldson 1938:67). Even now the shrine at Mashad probably still has a staff of several hundred; in the late 1960's the smaller shrine at Qom had a hundred attendants (Bazin 1973:93, Yann 1980:84).

As well as those actually employed by the administration of a shrine like Mashad or Qom, many others use the shrine as their place of business. Among these are the Koran reciters (huffāz), the readers of prescribed prayers (ziyārat khānān) who accompany the pilgrims as they go round the shrine, prayer writers (du'ā nevīs/singular) who write special prayers which are tied to the arms of their purchasers or their children to ward off disease or bring good luck, and solicitors whose real business is to arrange temporary marriages for male pilgrims. Shi'ites recognise a category of temporary marriage called mut'a which appears to amount to prostitution (D.M. Donaldson 1933:185-6, Bazin 1973:100).

Information of this kind about the bigger Afghan shrines is hard to come by. The shrine at Mazar-i-Sharif is reported to have a large number of employees who are all known as mutawallīs. Until recently the

posts were all hereditary ones, and if a man had no direct male heir his nearest kin were given preference. Nowadays, however, it is becoming increasingly common for the Riyasat-i-Ali Awqaf to appoint someone to fill the position (Einzmann 1977:75). Shrines like Mazar-i-Sharif, Mashad and Qom with their administrative hierarchies and large numbers of employees have probably always been the exception rather than the rule in Afghanistan and Iran. A much larger number of shrines were, as noted above, run by what Wolfe (1966:48) and L. Dupree (1976:4) call "brotherhoods", composed of supposed descendants of the saint whose tomb is the shrine's raison d'être, such as Shah Maqsud in the Kandahar region and Gazargah outside Herat.

As the term "brotherhood" is usually used in the Islamic context to refer to a Sufi order (ṭarīqa), it is probably clearer simply to call a group supposedly descended from a saint and associated with his shrine a lineage. A good Iranian example is the shrine of Pir Sultan Ibrahim in the territory of the Bakhtiari tribe in the Zagros mountains. This has a very large lineage of guardians who are said to be descended from a certain Sultan Ibrahim, a brother of the Imam Reza (Brooks 1981: 13). Sometimes the members of the lineage associated with a shrine may act as pīrs (instructors on the Sufi path) as well as simply keepers (mutawallīs). An example from Afghanistan is the shrine of Gazargah which is the home of a lineage composed of the descendants of the Sufi poet and philosopher, Ansari, who is buried there. They are reported to devote "their lives to meditation and to

perpetuating the teachings of Ansari" (Wolfe 1966:48).

Unfortunately we have no detailed description of how an Afghan or Iranian shrine of this kind might be run, but Jeffery (1979a) is a very useful account of the way in which the supposed descendants of the Chishti pīr Hazrat Nizamud-din (d. 1325) administer the shrine built around his tomb, a popular place of pilgrimage on the outskirts of New Delhi. Here the descendants of the saint (pīrzāda) are divided into three khāndān, which Jeffery translates as patrilineage. The khāndān take it in turns to be 'on duty' at the shrine and to collect the donations which pilgrims place in the trunks beside the shrine's two major tombs. In addition the pīrzādas compete for the other sources of income generated by the shrine. These comprise the sale of flowers and other requisites for the pilgrims' devotions, acting as spiritual advisers to the pilgrims (pīr-murīdī) and the system of 'pleaders and guests' (wakīl and mehmān), through which a regular visitor to the shrine is attached to a particular pīrzāda by being registered in his book and makes contributions to him alone.

Similarly, with reference to Swat, Barth (1965: 59) reports that "where the income from shrines is great, and there are several collateral lines of descendants, they may tend the shrine in turn, or divide the yearly income. The division is usually made according to the principle of tanzīl; that is, each group of relatives takes the share of the ancestor through whom they claim it, so that four sons of one brother receive the same

total as one son of another". Similar arrangements may well prevail at some Afghan shrines. At Shah Maqsud, in the Kandahar region, for example, the two sections of the lineage associated with the shrine take it in turns to be on duty and collect the pilgrims' offerings. As with the khāndān at Hazrat Nizamud-dīn's tomb in New Delhi, relations between the sections at Shah Maqsud are far from amicable. In the early 1970's one section tried to have its exclusive rights to the shrine recognised by the government, but it failed and both sections are still on duty there on alternate weeks (L. Dupree 1976:4).

Nowadays at least, shrines like these appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Of the one hundred and eighty-one shrines in the Kabul area described by Einzmann (1977), only six have more than one full-time keeper. Of these, the one with the largest number of attendants is the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi which has nine official mutawallīs (Einzmann 1977:129). As regards the remaining shrines, twenty-six have a full-time caretaker or a malang in residence, while a further twenty-nine are looked after by relatives or former pupils (murīdīn) of the person whose tomb is the shrine's raison d'être, or by people living nearby or by the owner of the land on which the shrine stands, without any individual being in attendance at the shrine all the time. One hundred and twenty shrines, roughly two-thirds, have no caretaker at all.

b. amenities offered by shrines:-

As we saw at the end of the previous chapter, it is the shrines consisting of real or supposed tombs or relics rather than the natural shrines which have become the most popular Islamic pilgrimage centres in both Iran and Afghanistan. As such they are the ones which possess the largest range of features besides the tomb or relic which is the principal reason for their existence.

In the first place, a shrine may possess one or more chilla khānas (literally 'forty day houses'), which are small cell-like rooms used by Sufis for holding a forty day retreat (Schimmel 1975:105). Chilla khānas may also be found at mosques or in isolated spots in the mountains, but the practice of performing these retreats is becoming rare today (Einzmann 1977:41, Utas 1980:64). Secondly, a shrine may have a mosque or prayer room attached to it. The shrine at Qom, for example, has three mosques, the largest of which was completed only a few years ago, while, as we saw in chapter two, the shrine at Mashad boasts the beautiful mosque commissioned by Gohar Shad (D.M. Donaldson 1933:175, Bazin 1973:92, Fischer 1980:63). In fact nearly all the shrines which may be classified as national or regional have mosques attached to them, and many of the district ones do as well.

It is worth noting here that occasionally the opposite process takes place, and a mosque, a building

intended for communal prayer, sometimes contains a tomb or reliquary in one corner which becomes the object of individual attentions. A good example of this is the mosque of the Hair of the Prophet in Kandahar (N.H. Dupree 1971:214). Pilgrims must of course perform their ablutions before using the mosques or prayer rooms attached to shrines, and a third facility which is found at many of them is some kind of provision for ritual washing. It is also desirable, though not compulsory, for pilgrims to approach the tomb of a saint in a state of ritual purity, and so the bigger shrines all have pools or tanks of water or at least taps which can be used for washing (D.M. Donaldson 1933:180, 271, Alberts 1963:880, Einzmann 1977:98, 179, Fischer 1980:110-1).

Fourthly, many shrines provide some sort of sleeping accommodation for pilgrims as well as for the keepers and their families. Many shrines in the Kabul area, for example, have a sort of verandah which offers some protection from the elements, while proper guest houses are found at a few of the bigger shrines such as the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi (Einzmann 1977:41, 120). Curiously perhaps, such popular shrines as Mashad and Mazar-i-Sharif do not provide any special accommodation for pilgrims, though as at Qom they are presumably allowed to sleep in the courtyards (Bazin 1973:98). However, the Imamzada Ali Akbar in the Garmsar, like many other Iranian shrines and mosques, has a number of cubicles along the inner walls which are for the use of pilgrims, attendants and malangs (Alberts 1963:880).

Some shrines have cooking facilities where pilgrims can prepare their own food, while at others food is prepared by the attendants. Early in the sixteenth century, for example, the Safavid Shah Ismail founded a special trust to pay for the distribution of food at the shrine of his ancestor Safi al-din at Ardebil. In the seventeenth century more than a thousand people are reported to have been fed at the shrine every day, though this apparently ceased in the eighteenth century when the shrine's patrons fell from power (Morton 1975:52). Fifty years ago the shrine at Mashad had a large kitchen which served five or six hundred meals a day (E. of Islam 1936 entry 'Mashad'). Food is still prepared for pilgrims and for the poor at a few of the shrines in the Kabul area, such as the nazar gāh of Hazrat Abbas and the Ziyarat of Sakhi Sayyid Jafar (Einzmann 1977:153, 247). Many other shrines have a simple fireplace where food can be cooked; some even have a special room for the purpose (Einzmann 1977:40). Food is often prepared at shrines and distributed to the poor in fulfilment of a vow; I say more about this in chapter five.

A sixth and very important feature of many shrines is a graveyard. Since the shrines are believed to be continuously emitting baraka, burial in their vicinity increases the chances of being admitted to paradise. Though both Sunnis and Shi'ites believe in the value of burial near a saint's tomb, the more extensive cemeteries are on the whole attached to the Shi'ite rather than the Sunni shrines. This is because Shi'ites are particularly anxious to win the intercession of the

Imams and their close relatives by being buried near them, whereas Sunnis have been content with the more numerous and widely distributed tombs of Old Testament prophets, heroes of early Islam and famous Sufis. Hence Shi'ites have been willing to transport corpses for long distances in order to bury them at the right places, whereas Sunnis have not needed to do so (Ferrier 1857: 492, D.M. Donaldson 1933:96-7).

The result has been that the city of Qom, for example, like Kerbela in Iraq and Mashad, is a gigantic necropolis whose cemeteries cover a wide area. They are found as far away as twelve kilometres from the shrine itself. Burial in them is expensive; in the late sixties an ordinary grave with a headstone cost 30,000 rials (over £200), while burial in the precincts of the sanctuary itself cost as much as 200,000 rials (about £1,500) (Bazin 1973:101-2). Similarly, burial within the inner precincts of the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul, which is also surrounded by an extensive graveyard, is very costly (Einzmann 1977:121). Examples of Sunni shrines adjacent to cemeteries are those of the Shahada-i-Salihien area in Kabul, in particular the shrines of Cheshmeh Khizr, Hazrat Tamim, Panjah-i-Shah and Jan Baz (Einzmann 1977: 193-202). Whether Shi'ite or Sunni, only the richest and most powerful have had the good fortune to be buried in the immediate vicinity of a famous saint's tomb, and many of the well-known shrines have members of ruling dynasties interred within their precincts. As well as the various members of the Safavid dynasty buried at Qom, for example, the Qajar Shahs Fath Ali (reigned 1779-1834) and Muhammad Shah (reigned 1834-1848) are buried in a

chapel adjoining the sanctuary. In view of Reza Shah's hostility towards the shrines at Qom and Mashad, it is somewhat ironical that his own mausoleum should be situated close to the sanctuary of Shah Abdul Azim at Rayy (Nagel 1973:105).

A number of shrines possess such amenities as gardens and fishponds, the latter usually containing carp, which in Snegarev's view is regarded as a sacred fish (1977b:20-1). Where the site permits people like to plant trees and flowers around a shrine, both to give pleasure to the saint associated with it and to make it more attractive to visitors (Einzmann 1977:39). The shrines of Shahada-i-Salihen for example are situated among trees and gardens as well as the graveyards we mentioned just now. Kabulis find them pleasant spots for picnics on warm spring days, especially when the Judas tree is in bloom (Wolfe 1965:92).

Some of the more popular shrines had other attractions. As we saw above, small groups of musicians performed in the naqqāra khānas at Mashad and Ardebil. I noted that though the naqqāra khāna at Ardebil has long since been abandoned, the one at Mashad may still be in use. Kettledrums are also played at sunrise and sunset at the shrine of Shah Maqsud near Kandahar (D.M. Donaldson 1933:180, Morton 1975:54, L. Dupree 1976:6). We also saw that the shrine at Qom was endowed with a small hospital for the use of pilgrims by one of the Safavid Shahs (Fischer 1980:107-8). Among the different buildings forming part of the shrine complex at Ardebil

were not only the dār al-hadīs in which instruction in the field of religious learning concerned with the Traditions of the Prophet took place, but also a dār al-huffāz, which was a room for the Koran readers and a sharbat khāna in which sherbet and sweets were prepared for important visitors (Morton 1974, 1975 passim).

Some of the shrines which possessed amenities like these were not just ziyārats to which pilgrimages were made to request a saint for some favour or other. They were also institutions having some resemblance to monasteries or convents, known as khānaqāhs, which provided board and lodging for a Sufi pīr and a circle of murīdīn (disciples) as well as hospitality for travellers (Trimingham 1971:171-2). Their focal point and the reason for their existence was a tomb, usually that of a pīr, and it was customarily the object of visits by ordinary pilgrims as well as wandering Sufis. The shrines of Safi al-din at Ardebil and Shah Ni'matullah Wali at Mahan near Kerman were well-known Iranian khānaqāhs. The latter still appears to function as a khānaqāh, as does the shrine of the eleventh century poet and philosopher, Ansari, at Gazargah outside Herat across the border in Afghanistan (Wolfe 1966:48). Others are said to exist at such places as Karukh, Navin, Obbeh and Chisht (Utas 1980:61).

It is also worth noting at this point that the shrines at Qom and Mashad have for some time been more or less closely associated with the principal centres of religious education in Iran. At both places these

madrassas (religious colleges) form part of the same complex of buildings which contains the shrine. Since the 1920's Qom has increasingly taken over Mashad's role as the principal centre of religious education in Iran. This is because many religious scholars moved to Qom from the shrines in Iraq following the British occupation during the First World War, while others moved from Mashad owing to the severity with which Reza Shah treated the madrassas there during the 1920's and 1930's (Bazin 1973:103, Fischer 1980:109). The exact nature of the links between the madrassas and the shrines at Mashad and Qom remains unclear. According to Bazin (ibid) at Qom the majority of the clergy have no connection with the shrine. Nevertheless, Yann (1980:67) reports that the independence of the Iranian ulama vis`à`vis the Shahs has been partly assured by the awqāf of the shrines, particularly Mashad. It does seem likely that part of the revenue from the endowments of these shrines is used to finance the religious colleges. Whatever the facts of the matter, it is no accident that the most important madrassas are so closely linked with the most important shrines. Such connections are much less apparent in predominantly Sunni Afghanistan, and demonstrate, inter alia, the central role which shrines have come to play in Shi'ism.

Summary:-

In the first section we saw that charitable trusts known as awqāf were often established for the benefit of shrines, and that some of them, in particular Mashad, became and remain substantial landowners as a result. This was one reason why secular rulers were always interested in maintaining ultimate authority over these shrines, even if in practice they rarely interfered with their administration. However, we also saw that the Safavid Shahs in particular had other reasons for taking an active interest in the more famous Iranian shrines. On the one hand they wanted to encourage their subjects to visit these shrines instead of going on pilgrimage to the ones in Iraq which were controlled by their enemies, the Ottoman Turks. On the other they wanted to discourage people from attributing any political significance to the doctrine of the Imamate. The Imams and imāmzādas were to be regarded as other-worldly intercessors whose powers could be solicited by visiting their shrines. Nevertheless, until the late nineteenth century royal supervision of even the most famous shrines appears to have been relatively loose in both Iran and Afghanistan. Subsequently, however, there has been considerable interference by governments in the administration of some of the better-known shrines and their awqāf, and in Afghanistan in particular this is being extended to many smaller shrines which have traditionally been almost wholly autonomous.

I went on to look at the way in which shrines were actually administered, pointing out that to this day the shrines at Mashad, Qom and Mazar-i-Sharif have large and specialised staffs. I noted that the position of keeper (mutawallī) or attendant (khādim) at most shrines has traditionally been an hereditary one, though this is one of the areas where the wish of both Afghan and Iranian governments to exercise stricter control over shrines has increasingly been making itself felt. Some shrines, such as Gazargah and Shah Maqsud in Afghanistan and Pir Sultan Ibrahim in Iran, still appear to be run by lineages whose members are supposedly descended from the saint whose tomb is the shrine's raison d'être. However, many shrines have only one mutawallī while the majority have no full-time keeper at all.

In the second section I described some of the amenities shrines may possess, such as chilla khānas, mosques, facilities for ritual washing, sleeping accommodation, kitchens, cemeteries and gardens. I noted that shrines have often been incorporated within khānaqāhs, institutions which offered Sufi training and dispensed hospitality to Sufis and ordinary pilgrims and travellers. I also drew attention to the fact that the two most popular Iranian shrines, at Mashad and Qom, have traditionally been and still are associated with the two principal centres of religious education in the country. It is worth pointing out in conclusion that in Iran and Afghanistan such features as kitchens, cemeteries and gardens are not regularly found in association with mosques as they are with shrines.

Chapter Four Pilgrimage Organisation and Ritual

"The time of departure was fixed for one o'clock in the afternoon; the whole caravan was in the saddle, grouped around its conductor, Agha Mir Nizam, who began to chant 'let us go on pilgrimage to Kerbela; let us address a prayer to God for Muhammad and his descendants'. The chorus responded with the Arab formula of blessing 'may God bless Muhammad and his family', and the pilgrims disappeared in the direction of Zendjan" (Aubin 1908:18, my translation).

In this chapter I ask if it is possible to generalise about the kinds of people who visit shrines in Iran and Afghanistan, whether in terms of their sectarian affiliation, sex or social class. I also examine briefly the question how pilgrimage to these shrines is organised, and ask whether Spooner has over-emphasized its personal character. I continue by exploring some aspects of pilgrimage ritual. Finally, I ask whether shrines in Iran and Afghanistan are noticeably rural and peripheral.

a. who goes to shrines?:-

In the first place, is it possible to say whether there are differences in the extent to which Iranian and Afghan Sunnis, Shi'ites and Ismailis patronise shrines? In view of the fact that, as we saw in the last chapter, Shi'ism places such emphasis on the

importance of obtaining the intercession of the Imams and imāmzādas, one might expect Shi'ites to visit shrines more often than Sunnis (Arjomand 1979:93-5). On the other hand, as I explain in chapter six, both Shi'ites and Sunnis often visit shrines in order to obtain some practical assistance from the saints. This may mean that the greater emphasis the Shi'ite literature places on the necessity of visiting saints' shrines and thereby obtaining their intercession if one wants to reach paradise may not make as much difference as one might expect. It is true that in the Kabul region both Shi'ites and Sunnis say that Shi'ites are more attached than Sunnis to saints and their shrines, but the evidence is too fragmentary to draw any hard and fast conclusions. All that can be said with any certainty is that Sunnis, Shi'ites and Ismailis in Iran and Afghanistan have traditionally visited shrines in large numbers (see e.g. L. Dupree 1976:13-7, Einzmann 1977:22). Nevertheless, it may be that the custom of making long-distance pilgrimages to a few important shrines such as Mashad and Qom has been longer and better established in Iran. I suggested in the previous chapter that it is only within the last fifty or so years that Mazar-i-Sharif has become a national shrine visited by pilgrims from all over Afghanistan.

Another aspect of this problem is the question whether any shrines are used exclusively by members of one sect or another. The answer is that the great Shi'ite sanctuaries, such as those at Mashad and Qom, are scarcely ever visited by Sunnis. Generally speaking, with the exception of those associated with Ali, shrines

connected with the Twelve Imams and the imāmzādas are not very popular with Sunnis. However, none of the shrines in the Kabul area, for example, are frequented exclusively by members of one sect, while the great shrine of Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif is of course patronised by both Sunnis and Shi'ites (Einzmann 1977:22).

It is also worth noting that by contrast with Palestine and the Indian sub-continent, very few shrines are shared by Muslims and adherents of other religions (Canaan 1927:98, Mandelbaum 1966:1178). This may be partly due to the fact that non-Muslims are a smaller proportion of the total population in Iran and Afghanistan than in Palestine or India. The only shared shrine of which I have heard in Afghanistan is Cheshmeh Khizr in Kabul, which is visited twice a year by the Hindus of the city as well as by the Muslim population all year round, having apparently retained the sacred character it enjoyed before the coming of Islam (Wolfe 1965:96). In Iran a few Christian shrines in the northwest near the Turkish border, where there is a substantial Christian minority, are or were visited by Muslims as well. The church of Mart Maryam (the Virgin Mary) in Urmieh, for example, was visited by Muslim as well as Christian women who feared they were not producing enough milk to feed their babies (Massé 1938:400).

Turning to the question of the sex of pilgrims, it has been suggested that there is in Islamic society a tendency for male and female styles of religion to develop and that this can be seen in, for example, the

way women mostly patronise shrines and men mosques (Trimingham 1971:232). In this context, it is worth noting a recent paper by Davis (1979) which addresses itself to the problem why, in the Mediterranean region, Catholic men are expected to be less devout than Catholic women, whereas in the Islamic countries the reverse is true and men are expected to be more devout than women. In Davis's view, this religious division of labour cannot be explained either by reference to parallel divisions in the behaviour expected of each sex in the secular realm (op. cit.:10), nor can it be accounted for by anything in Christian or Islamic doctrine (op. cit.:23). Instead, he concludes, the answer is to be found in the way that after about 1750 the Roman Catholic Church began to encourage lay women to acquire prominence in religious practice in order to compensate for men's declining interest in it (op. cit.:26). This may explain how women have come to play the central religious role in Roman Catholic societies, but it cannot account for the fact that they do not do so in Islamic ones.

The problem is too complex to go into in any detail here, but a brief comment may not be out of place. I suggest that Davis is too quick to dismiss the possibility that the differences in behaviour expected of each sex in the secular sphere may influence their religious activities. In both Iran and Afghanistan men and women have traditionally been and very often still are socially segregated, and men remain the dominant sex (see e.g. Gulick 1976:207-15, Fischer 1978:189-215). The degree of segregation between the sexes in small-town Afghanistan,

for example, is so strict that just as unrelated men and women should not mingle either in the home or market place and the severest sanctions should be applied if they are found to have done so, so it would be highly inappropriate for them to worship together in the same mosque. I suggest that it is only by looking at the problem in this way that we can understand how it is that, in Iran and Afghanistan at any rate, it is not so much a question of one sex being more devout than the other but rather of each tending to have its own fairly discrete sphere of religious activity.

Thus in both the Afghan and Iranian countryside and to some extent in the towns as well, women rarely pray in mosques which often take on the role of men's social and political as well as religious centres (Alberts 1963:810-1, Fernea 1972:386-7, Poulton 1979 I: 50). However, women seem to be actually excluded from mosques more often in Afghanistan than in Iran (see e.g. Poulton 1973 I:63, 1979 I:199, N. Tapper 1979:229). In Iran women are often permitted to use the local mosque for prayer. In one of the Mamasani villages near Shiraz they are reported as doing so more regularly than men (Susan Wright, personal communication). It appears to be much more common, however, for women to be in theory allowed to pray in the local mosque, but in practice to find it very difficult to do so because they are ritually unclean (for example when menstruating) or because they have too much work to do at home (see e.g. Friedl 1980: 162-5). In some cases, as in the village of Devarabad, women are only allowed to attend the mosque on special

occasions, such as the commemoration of Ali's martyrdom which begins on the nineteenth of Ramadan (Alberts 1963: 811, 861). This does not of course mean that women are less religious than men; often they are more conscientious about praying and keeping the fast (see Alberts 1963:838, 852).

Nevertheless, given the fact that it is usually difficult if not actually impossible for women to pray in mosques, it is perhaps only to be expected that women should be the most enthusiastic and frequent visitors to shrines (see e.g. Einzmann 1977:21). At certain times of the year, such as Naw Ruz (New Year), the balance of the sexes at the more popular shrines is more equal, but it is not only the local shrines which tend to be the preserve of women¹. Women form the great majority of visitors to the regional and even national shrines, for example Qom (Bazin 1973:86).

There are various reasons for this, religious, social and psychological. To begin with, except among the urban westernised middle and upper classes, not only are few women able to pray regularly in mosques, but it is rare for women to be in a position to perform the hajj or give alms (zakāt) to the poor (see e.g. N. Tapper 1968:74, 1979:229). Nor are they able to take part in

(footnote¹: According to the shamsi solar calendar still to some extent in use in both Afghanistan and Iran, the year begins on the 21st of March (L. Dupree 1973:675).)

Sufi rituals, or the Shi'ite ceremonies in Muharram which commemorate the martyrdom of the Imam Husain. They are largely excluded from the ceremonial side of Islam (see e.g. Friedl 1980:162). Thus, apart from prayer, pilgrimage to shrines is the principal means by which Durrani Pashtun women in the Sar-i-pul area in northern Afghanistan participate in "at least semi-orthodox religious activities" (N. Tapper 1979:229, see also Friedl 1980:165 and M. Hooglund 1982:16). Making vows to saints and pilgrimages to their shrines give women the opportunity of playing an active role in one religious sphere at least.

At the same time, visits to shrines provide women with an acceptable reason for leaving the seclusion of the household to which many are otherwise almost entirely confined. These visits give them virtually their sole opportunity to escape from the routine of domestic drudgery, and to meet friends and keep up with local news (see e.g. Einzmann 1977:21). Accordingly many trips to shrines are cheerful occasions when a festive atmosphere prevails. However, this is not always the case. Women's markedly lower social status creates additional hardships and difficulties for them and means that they tend to be more in need of the consolation shrines can provide. In Afghanistan, at least, it is almost exclusively women who are subject to possession by jinns (see e.g. Poulton 1973 III:136). Possession is usually known only through the illness said to result from it. However, some women, especially those who suffer some social misfortune such as childlessness (for which the

woman is usually held responsible), or an unloving husband or uncooperative co-wife, actually fall into violent fits which are believed to be caused by the jinns which are possessing them. Visiting a shrine is one means by which these jinns may be exorcised (N. Tapper op. cit. c.f. I. Lewis 1971:79).

In view of this, one might suppose that women would tend to visit shrines associated with female saints rather than male ones because of the greater insight into women's problems female saints might be expected to possess. This is indeed the case with the Luri village women described by Friedl (1980:165) and as we saw above the shrine of Fatimeh Massoumeh is very popular with women. Curiously, the same does not appear to be true in Afghanistan where the proportion of shrines associated with female saints is very low, in the Kabul area for example 2.76 per cent; all of them belong to the district or local levels. Under the circumstances, it is also curious that only one or two shrines are closed to men whereas entry to so many mosques is barred to women. The only famous shrine men cannot visit today is Bibi Shahrbanu outside Rayy (Fischer 1978:202), though at one time the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae, known locally as the tomb of Solomon's mother and regarded as a shrine, was visited only by women, but this no longer appears to be the case (Massé 1938:398). Part of the shrine of Pir Sa'adat Khatun in Bakhtiari territory in the Zagros mountains in western Iran is also closed to men (Brooks 1981:15).

I conclude this section by asking whether it is possible to link shrine visiting with any particular social classes. The evidence here is particularly poor, but there are indications that the smaller tradesmen in the bazaars remain especially devoted patrons of shrines. From the huge Tehran bazaar for example they frequently visit the shrine of Abdul Azim in Rayy and other saints' tombs in the vicinity of Tehran and Qom. Many bazaar tradesmen have cemetery plots near Abdul Azim's tomb and have relatives buried there (Thaiss 1973:57-8)². Fischer likewise links the habit of visiting shrines with the older urban neighbourhoods in Iran like the Tehran bazaar, as well as the villages (1980:136-7). The highly westernised upper class and the new middle class which has received a western-style education are not very interested in shrines. The women, however, may still enjoy the opportunities the saints and their shrines offer for socialising, in Shiraz, for example, the rawzas and sufras connected with vows made to Abbas, the Imam Husain's half-brother, who has a shrine in the city (Betteridge 1980:145).

The fact that in Iran it is still possible for a purely local shrine to undergo a dramatic increase in popularity and become a regional one testifies to the resilience of the belief in the efficacy of pilgrimage as a means of winning a saint's intercession. A good

(footnote²: It is said that visiting Abdul Azim three times earns the same degree of religious merit as going on pilgrimage to Husain's tomb at Kerbela (Thaiss 1973: 58).)

example is the supposed tomb of the imānzāda Ibrahim, a son of the seventh Imam, Musa Kazim, in the Talesh region of northwestern Iran. Thirty years ago the shrine was described as merely "a place of pilgrimage for the surrounding villages", and a simple wooden hut sheltered the tomb. Now it has between fifty and a hundred thousand visitors a year who come from all over western Gilan, a new shrine building and a large number of souvenir shops and simple hotels, while a new road has been built to within easy walking distance of it (Bazin 1980 II:201).

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, it is particularly hard to link the habit of patronising shrines with particular social groups. However, it is clear that each of the urban craft and commercial guilds still tends to have its own patron saint, to whose shrine pilgrimages are performed by its members (Einzmann 1977: 13). In the northern city of Tashqurghan, for example, there are twenty five corporations of artisans and traders in the bazaar; each has a patron saint to whose shrine pilgrimages are made (Centlivres 1972:163-7). Among the best known guild saints in Afghanistan are the Jawan Mard-i-Qasab who, as we saw in chapter two, is the patron saint of butchers, and David (Old Testament Kings I-III), the patron of blacksmiths. Recently he has become the patron saint of lorry drivers as well because of his connection with metalworking (Centlivres 1972: 166-8, see also Snasarev 1977a:15). As regards those Afghans who have had a western-style education they are, like their far more numerous Iranian counterparts, likely

to be somewhat sceptical as to the value of saints and shrines. Einzmann however emphasizes the extent to which the cult of saints and their shrines still finds support throughout Afghan society, even amongst the educated (1977:21).

b. pilgrimage organisation:-

Spooner (1971:174-5) suggests that in Iran a mosque is always associated with a particular community, and "represents the only force for corporate unity" in the Iranian village. By contrast, he says, shrine visiting is always an individual matter, and a shrine need have no links with any particular community. In the next chapter I look at the question whether the ritual performed at Iranian and Afghan shrines is always of a purely personal nature. In this section I ask whether pilgrimage itself, as Spooner would have us believe, lacks any communal dimension.

There are two points to be made here. In the first place, it is true that in Iran and Afghanistan one does not appear to find the association of local shrines with particular lineages such as occurs or used to occur in the maghreb and is expressed in an annual visit to and feast at the saint's tomb (see e.g. Peters 1976, Mason 1977:56, Eickelmann 1977:22). However, communal visits to shrines in Iran and Afghanistan do still occasionally take place and may once have been more widespread. Once a year, for example, the men of Argandeh Pain, a village

near Kabul, meet on a pre-determined day at the village shrine of Chinar Baba for prayer and a picnic. An animal is slaughtered in honour of the saint, and the men take the opportunity to discuss communal matters (Einzmann 1977:227, for other examples see pp.239, 265).

The only Iranian example I have come across is that of the Mamasani village near Shiraz whose women annually visit the local shrine of Shahzada Husain in a group (Susan Wright, personal communication). The shrines associated with these communal picnics resemble the village shrines of the Upper Nansa valley in northern Spain whose image epitomised the villager's identity as a villager and was usually considered to protect the enterprises of the village community as well as the individual villagers (Christian 1972:66-8). Undoubtedly, the saints associated with local shrines in Afghanistan are often regarded as village patrons even if there is no communal visit to them. This is apparent from the stories which tell how the saint saved his village from some calamity such as an epidemic of cholera or attack by foreign invaders (e.g. Einzmann 1977:214, 221, 237, 240, 248, 289).

In the second place, it is important to note that communal pilgrimages in Iran to the famous shrines like Qom and Mashad are often organised by local religious meeting groups known as hay'at-i-mazhabī. These local groups are often run by bazaar merchants. During Ramadan they support rawzas, and during the rest of the year they meet in members' houses to study the Koran and

discuss religious issues. These bazaar neighbourhood organisations provide the framework of much popular religious practice, and the pilgrimages they organise are described by Fischer as "totally local enterprises integrated as semi-permanent features of community organisation" (1980:134-5, see also Thaïss 1973:193-5)³.

c. the ritual of pilgrimage:-

As we saw above, the fame of some Iranian and Afghan shrines draws pilgrims from far away and has given rise to fully-fledged pilgrimages comparable to those of the Christian world. However, very few accounts of the ritual of pilgrimage in Iran could be found, and none regarding Afghanistan, so that it is only possible to make a few tentative comments on this topic.

In the first place, Iranian pilgrims to distant shrines left their local communities with some ceremony. In the village of Devarabad, for example, in the bakhsh of Garmsar to the southeast of Tehran, there was

(footnote³: in this connection it should be pointed out that there is a communal aspect to pilgrimage to Kerbela from the Shi'ite villages of southern Iraq. On the tenth of Muharram, Ashura, each Shi'ite village organises a shoulder-beating procession. Money is collected so that the participants can travel to Kerbela to join the big mourning procession which takes place there ten day later. The villagers all travel in the same bus to Kerbela where each village group performs in turn in front of the shrine (Fernea 1969:199).)

traditionally a "gala community send-off" for the pilgrims to Mashad who wore red neckerchiefs in addition to their usual clothing (Alberts 1963:844). The red neckerchief appears to have been a sign of the pilgrim's special status, the equivalent of the wallet which was the medieval European pilgrim's badge (Finucane 1977:41-2); its colour seems to have been an auspicious one (see chapter five, p.145). The ritual as a whole was one of separation from the usual social milieu and dedication to the holy journey. The nineteenth century pilgrim Nurullah Khan similarly describes the way in which a large party of friends and relatives accompanied him on the first stage of his pilgrimage from Kerman to Mashad (Sykes 1910:177). The existence of these rituals of separation from the local community suggests that Victor Turner has been right to draw attention to the liminal or as he now prefers to put it "liminoid" aspects of pilgrimage (1978:34-5).

It appears that pilgrimages were sometimes organised on a regular basis by professional couriers. The courier would arrange accommodation and food for the pilgrims, as well as carrying the red banner which accompanied a pilgrim caravan and leading the prayers which were customarily chanted when it entered a town or village (Ferrier 1857:56, Aubin 1908:17-8). Once upon the journey, as seems to have been true of Christian and to some extent Hindu pilgrimage, the greater the hardship the more meritorious the pilgrimage (Sykes 1910:185, Bhardwaj 1973:32-3, Sumption 1975:126-7). "If a misfortune is experienced on the road, it helps to make the

pilgrimage acceptable, or if the pilgrim dies on the way, he goes direct to heaven" (B.A. Donaldson 1938:61)⁴.

Voluntarily to subject oneself to discomfort and danger in this way greatly pleased the saint for it proved one's attachment to him. Thus, as noted in chapter three, in 1601 the Safavid Shah Abbas the Great walked from Isfahan to the shrine of the Imam Reza at Mashad. When he arrived, he performed the menial task of trimming the thousands of candles which illuminated the shrine (Sykes 1910:272, D.M. Donaldson 1933:176-7). Similarly the Qajar Shah Fath Ali often visited the tomb of Fatimeh at Qom on foot, "a sign of great humility" (Bazin 1973:85). It is also worth noting that the pilgrims, at least in the caravan which the nineteenth century traveller, Ferrier, accompanied to Mashad, shared the experience of normative *communitas* which Victor Turner has suggested tends to prevail among pilgrims whatever their religion (see e.g. 1974a:170, but see also Pfaffenberger 1979:269 and Sallnow 1981:176). "A social feeling", wrote Ferrier, "pervades all the members of a caravan: they have their food in common; the noble, the tradesman, the peasant and the fakeer sit in the same circle and eat out of the same dish, and this without the least possibility of offence being taken or pride being wounded; it is sufficient that they are Mussulmans and pilgrims" (1857: 58).

(footnote⁴: even the rich used to walk the last few miles to the medieval English shrine as an act of piety (Finucane 1977:40).)

It appears to have been quite common for pilgrims to several of the big shrines, especially Mashad, to add a stone to one of the heaps found by the side of the road at the point at which the shrine could be seen for the first time (Massé 1938:391)⁵. The pilgrim to Mashad customarily placed a stone on top of a cairn at a place about fourteen miles from the shrine, known as the Hill of Salutation, from which he first saw its golden dome. There are said to be acres of cairns there (B.A. Donaldson 1938:151, Byron 1981:83). According to Donaldson (ibid) the stones have been heaped up out of gratitude that the journey was almost over, and each cairn was intended to symbolise the "eternal house", by which she appears to mean the pilgrim's future home in paradise, which his pilgrimage will help him to win. The stones will also bear witness on the Day of Judgement to the fact that the pilgrim has really visited the shrine because on that day men may ask animals, plants and stones to testify on their behalf (Einzmann 1977:60). Ferrier also reports that when his caravan reached this spot, each pilgrim, as well as adding a stone to one of the cairns, tore a strip from his clothing and hung it on the nearest bush. It was explained to Ferrier that the eyes of the Imam Reza were always on the mountain and that these shreds of cloth "remind him of what he ought to do on their behalf with Mahomet, Ali and other holy

(footnote⁵: a similar practice is recorded on the part of Muslim pilgrims to the shrine of Nabi Musa on the West Bank of the Jordan and of Christian pilgrims in the Peruvian Andes (Canaan 1927:75, Sallnow 1981:172).)

personages who are to propitiate the Almighty in their favour" (1857:113, see below p.134).

Most pilgrims were in a state of high emotion by the time they arrived at the Hill of Salutation. Ferrier describes them as being "in ecstacies, in spite of their great fatigues, and in a delirium of pleasure... they ceased not for a long time to cry 'Yah Ali!' 'Yah, Imam Reza!'" (1857:113). It is said to have been a common act of piety for women who, after a lifetime of longing, had prevailed upon their husbands to bring them to Mashad, to forgo their claim to what Sykes (1910:229) calls their dowries on catching their first glimpse of the shrine⁶. Nurullah Khan met a merchant who was "beaming with happiness and shaking hands and receiving congratulations because his wife had transferred her rights to a large landed estate to her husband" (op. cit. :228). It is worth noting that not long before he reaches the Hill of Salutation the pilgrim passes the famous qadam gāh of the Imam Reza described at the beginning of chapter two, which he usually visits (B.A. Donaldson 1938:148). The existence of these sacred spots not far from Mashad perhaps illustrates Victor Turner's observation that as one approaches an important place of pilgrimage, whatever the religion concerned, "the symbols

(footnote⁶: strictly speaking, dowry is the wrong word here; what is meant is presumably the mahr, the gift given by the bridegroom to the bride in Muslim law when the contract of marriage is made, which becomes the property of the wife, and remains so even if the marriage is dissolved.)

become denser, richer, more convoluted - the landscape is coded into symbolic units packed with cosmological and theological meaning" (1974:210).

As they set out on the return journey it was customary for pilgrims to add another stone to the cairns at the Hill of Salutation. They asked those they met going to the shrine to pray for them there saying "we petition for prayer". In reply the latter would express the hope that their pilgrimage had been "accepted" (Sykes 1910:229). When they were nearly home pilgrims were usually met by a crowd of friends and relatives⁷.

Pilgrims returning to Devarabad were greeted by a large group of villagers including the village ākhūnd who chanted a eulogy to the Imam Reza. Upon reaching the village, a goat was sacrificed at the gate of each pilgrim's house, as an expression of thanks to God for having enabled him to come and go safely. Half the meat was given to the poor and half used for a reception feast. According to Alberts (1963:847),

"in past days reception feasts at the homes of returning pilgrims were grand and memorable events. Today they are decidedly unimpressive, and that they persist at all is largely due to the continuing view that receptions of this sort are required for the 'validation' of a pilgrimage. Otherwise, say the villagers, the pilgrimage is

(footnote⁷: Pilgrims returning from the hajj to Iranian villages are sometimes still greeted in the same way (M. Hooglund 1982:16).)

not 'accepted', though there is uncertainty whether acceptance by God or by the community is the more important" (1963:847).

Nurullah Khan also talks about the idea that a pilgrimage to be of any value to the pilgrim has to be "accepted", though for him there is no question that it is the Imam Reza or even Allah himself who does the accepting (Sykes 1910:277). The belief that a pilgrimage has to be "acceptable" (qabūl) is one found among Shi'ites even in connection with local pilgrimages, but does not appear to be shared by Sunnis. Thus Susan Wright (personal communication) reports that the pilgrimage made annually by the women from a Mamasani village to the local shrine was "unacceptable" when she accompanied them because it began to rain during the visit.

The pilgrimage to Mashad, Qom or Mazar-i-Sharif used to be a rare event for the ordinary person, the journey of a lifetime and not without hazard. Nowadays the relative ease, cheapness and frequency with which such a journey can be performed is likely to have made much of the ritual connected with pilgrimage seem pointless. Elaborate rituals of separation from and reintegration into the local community can serve little purpose if the pilgrim is only away from home for a few days. By the same token, pilgrimage in contemporary Iran is less likely to be characterised by the experience of normative *communitas*. It would be interesting to know whether the buses taking pilgrims to Mashad still stop at the Hill of Salutation.

d. shrines - rural and peripheral?

When we looked at the amenities possessed by shrines, we noted that some had pleasant gardens with trees and flowerbeds and were situated on the outskirts of urban areas. However, it is important to remember that many of the most famous shrines are to be found in the middle of large cities. This is the case, for example, with the three most important shrines in Iran and Afghanistan, Qom, Mashad and Mazar-i-Sharif. Among the well-frequented shrines which are located on or just beyond the edges of urban areas are the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul, the shrine of Ansari at Gazargah just outside Herat and the shrine of Bibi Shahrbanu at Rayy. However, very few shrines of any importance are more than a few miles away from a town or city. Among the few exceptions are the cave of the "Seven Sleepers" in the Maimana area in northwestern Afghanistan, the shrine of Shah Maqsud in the hills northwest of Kandahar and the tomb of Shah Ni'matullah Wali at Mahan some twenty miles from the city of Kerman in southeastern Iran.

In view of this it is perhaps surprising that Spooner should claim that "when city dwellers (in Iran) wish to resort to the shrine religion, they travel outside the city to a shrine that is generally in the rural village context" (1971:177). He avoids the need to explain how it is that the most important shrines in Iran happen to be in the centres of cities by suggesting that in fact they have been integrated into the formal religion of the mosque and city, and hence presumably no

longer really count as shrines (ibid). This seems to be an unsatisfactory way of handling the problem. It makes little sense to put the big shrines at Mashad and Qom in a separate category from the others for two main reasons. In the first place, the beliefs and practices associated with Mashad and Qom belong to the same complex as those associated with other less famous shrines. Thus, as we saw in chapter two, a number of other shrines in Iran are, like Qom, the supposed tombs of close relatives of the Imam Reza, for example those of his various brothers in Shiraz, Kakhk and in Bakhtiari territory (Spooner 1963:87, Nagel 1973:241, Brooks 1981:13). People believe that all shrines possess baraka, and that the saints associated with them will help them and intercede for them in just the same way, if not quite as effectively, as the Imam Reza and his sister Fatimeh. As I explain in the following chapter, they resort to the same kinds of ritual at nearly all the shrines they visit, including Mashad and Qom. In the last section I noted that pilgrims travelling by bus to the shrine at Mashad like to stop on the way at the shrine known as Qadamgah, where the Imam Reza's footprint is supposedly preserved, long enough to kiss and rub the sacred stone (B.A. Donaldson 1938:148-9). It does not seem very helpful to treat the shrine at Mashad and the one at Qadamgah as if each belonged in a separate category when they are often both visited in the course of a single journey.

The other reason why Spooner is wrong to suggest that the shrines at Qom and Mashad have been incorporated into the formal religion of the mosque is that one of the distinctive features of Shi'ism is the belief in "the immanent sacredness of the twelve Imams

and many other saints" (Gulick 1976:172). We saw in the last chapter that visiting shrines has become a central component of Shi'ism; as far back as the tenth century religious scholars such as Kulaini (d. 939) and Ibn Babawaihi (d. 991) were collecting traditions concerning the Imams' tombs and prayers to be said at them. Spooner might more accurately have said that in Iran the religion of the mosque had been absorbed into that of the shrine! I say more about this problem below, for the time being I want to stress that although many shrines are found on the outskirts of towns and cities, it is inaccurate to say that the countryside is the principal context of "shrine religion".

It may be worth pointing out here that by the same token Islamic shrines in Iran and Afghanistan are not notably 'peripheral' either, which indicates that Victor Turner (1974a:193) may be mistaken when he suggests that pilgrimage shrines tend to be found in peripheral places. He himself points out that Catholic shrines in Yucatan are less peripheral than those in central Mexico but he offers no explanation for this. It seems likely that the peripherality of shrines varies not only across but within religious traditions according to the shrines' raison d'être and the attitude of the religious authorities towards pilgrimage as well as the wider social, political and economic background. The marked peripherality of nineteenth and early twentieth century Marial shrines in western Europe, for example, compared with their medieval counterparts, may owe something to

the fact that if possession of a relic is the reason for a shrine's existence, then it can be built anywhere, even in the centre of a town, whereas it is perhaps less easy for a vision of the Virgin to occur in a crowded city than on a peaceful hillside.

Summary:-

I began the first section by pointing out that the paucity of information means that it is difficult to reach many hard and fast conclusions about the kinds of people who visit shrines in Iran and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, I ventured a few tentative suggestions. Firstly, there appears to be little difference in the extent to which Shi'ites patronise shrines compared with Sunnis and Ismailis. Secondly, in Iran and Afghanistan, as elsewhere in the Islamic world, there is a tendency for women to visit shrines more than men and for communal worship in mosques to be restricted to men. I suggested that this reflects the segregation of the sexes in other social spheres. Thirdly, as far as concerns links between shrines and different social categories, the upper classes and the new secularly-educated urban middle classes seem both in Iran and Afghanistan to be less interested in shrines than are the more traditional urban middle and lower middle class and the villagers.

In the second section, I examined Spooner's suggestion that most Iranian pilgrimage is performed by small groups of people and that by contrast with mosques

shrines do not have strong associations with any particular community. I showed that this needed qualification. Communal visits to the local shrine for an annual picnic are still made by the residents of several villages in the Kabul area, and elsewhere in Afghanistan and in Iran. In many villages the local saint is regarded as a village patron watching over its inhabitants. Moreover, in Iran at any rate, pilgrimage to the big shrines is often organised by local religious associations and people from the same neighbourhood take the opportunity to go on pilgrimage together. It would thus be wrong altogether to neglect the communal aspects of pilgrimage.

In the third section, a few comments were made as to the nature of pilgrimage ritual in Iran, in the absence of any information about Afghan pilgrimage. Pilgrims to distant shrines left their local communities with considerable ceremony. The rituals connected with this appear to have bestowed a special liminoid social status upon the pilgrim. The greater the hardship incurred in reaching the shrine, the more meritorious the pilgrimage was believed to be. It was customary for the long distance pilgrim to reach the point at which the object of his journey could first be seen in a state of considerable emotion. This was marked by minor rituals such as adding a stone to a cairn and tying a scrap of cloth to a bush. Finally, on his return home, the pilgrim was welcomed by a party of friends and relatives, and customarily there appears to have been an elaborate reception which signalled his reintegration into the community.

In the last section, the question was raised whether shrines in Iran and Afghanistan are predominantly rural as Spooner suggests or as Victor Turner puts it 'peripheral'. On the whole they are neither. Spooner sidesteps this problem by suggesting that the two most famous shrines in Iran, those at Qom and Mashad, both in the middle of cities, have been incorporated into what he calls the religion of the mosque and hence presumably are no longer to be thought of as shrines at all. This is unsatisfactory for two reasons. In the first place the beliefs and practices associated with Qom and Mashad are of the same kind as those associated with less popular shrines. Secondly, as I explained in the previous chapter, visiting the shrines of the Imams and their close relatives has an important part to play in attaining salvation. It has been amalgated with but by no means submerged by the beliefs and practices associated with the religion of the mosque.

Chapter Five Shrine Ritual

"I was amazed by his high building,
 I made a vow towards the doves and domes,
 Then I took the remaining steps towards
 his brickwork.
 I wished I could become his slave,
 The dust of his feet.
 I press my face to his threshold
 several times.
 How many, numberless people,
 Came from afar,
 From Kabul, Herat, and as far away
 as Kandahar."

(extract from song by Hazara pilgrim
 describing a visit to the shrine of
 Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif - Richard Tapper,
 personal communication)

In Spooner's (1971:175) view "the shrine is the scene and context of the routine business of everyday personal religion; that is, the asking of favours in return for vows. This business is performed by individuals. It is never corporate". Similarly Betteridge (1981:3) writes that the pilgrimage process in Iran is a personal one, both because it involves a relationship between two individuals, one of whom is closer to God than the other, and because visiting a shrine is an individual matter, answering private needs. It is certainly the case that most of the ritual associated with shrines is performed by and for individuals but there are some important exceptions. I examine these before going on consider the private ritual.

a. collective shrine ritual

In the first place, we should note that rawzas, Koran recitations and religious singing or chanting often take place at Shi'ite shrines, at certain times of the year in particular. The rawza is a highly expressive account of the events surrounding the martyrdom of the Imam Husain at Kerbela (not surprisingly therefore it is confined to Shi'ites). The rawza khān^u who delivers the rawza arouses the audience's emotions by dwelling on the sufferings of Husain and his family and they weep profusely; the sympathy they thereby demonstrate for the Imams earns them religious merit (savāb) (Spooner 1963: 86, Thaiss 1973:355, 398, Betteridge 1981:13-4). In Afghanistan rawzas are delivered at Naw Ruz, New Year's Day (March 21st), in particular, at such Shi'ite shrines as the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul, and at the shrine of Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif, which is visited by both Sunnis and Shi'ites (Einzmann 1977:126, Canfield, personal communication). In Iran rawzas commonly take place at shrines during the months of Ramadan and Muharram (Alberts 1963: 881, Spooner 1963:88).

In the second place, various rituals aimed at turning away some threat to the community as a whole take place at shrines, though they appear to be becoming increasingly rare. The first of these is rain-making ritual which need not necessarily take place at shrines (see e.g. B.A. Donaldson 1938:97) but has often done so. The people of Shiraz for example used to go to a shrine

known as the Seven Saints to pray for rain (Masse' 1938: 403)¹. An elaborate ceremony known as dar khasta bārān took place at the shrine of Pir Shah Qutbudin when large areas of Bakhtiari country were affected by drought. Leaders of the tribal sections whose territory had been worst affected by it went jointly to the shrine to ask its guardians to perform the ceremony. Its central feature was the lifting of two heavy conical stones into an upright position by one of the guardians, a task which was so severe that he died soon afterwards! The tribal leaders then collected a large sum of money from the tribesmen and paid it to the other guardians in recompense (Brooks 1981:14).

Ritual was also performed in connection with shrines to avert other dangers to the community. The bloodstained shirt of the Imam Husain, for example, is reported to have been kept in the royal mosque in Isfahan and to have been taken out only when the country was invaded. Then it was placed on the end of a lance and shown to the enemy and they were put to flight (Masse' 1938:402). In 1935 there was a cholera epidemic in Kandahar. In order to drive it out the Prophet's mantle was taken out of the Da Kherqa Sharif Ziyarat in which it was usually kept and carried "with ceremony to the Edgah mosque on the north of the city where special services were held" (N.H. Dupree 1971:211).

(footnote¹: Canaan (1927:219) describes the rain processions which occurred in connection with Palestinian shrines)

Other collective rituals are performed regularly at shrines and not just when some calamity threatens the community. One of the most dramatic is known as janda bālā kardan ('raising the standard') and occurs at the supposed tomb of Ali in Mazar-i-Sharif and the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul on New Year's Day (Naw Ruz) (see e.g. L. Dupree 1973:105, Einzmann 1977:126). A janda is also raised in the food bazaar at Mazar-i-Sharif at the same time and is supposed to guarantee its purity (Einzmann 1977:92). Something very similar occurs at the shrines of Hazrat Imam Yahya near Kunduz, Imam Baqir at Maimana, Imam-i-Khurd at Sar-i-Pul and Sayyid Jafar Mularad and Khalifa Mirjahan Wali at Ofian near Charikar. These rituals, however, appear to take place eight or nine days later (Kabul Times 31-3-1979, Richard Tapper, personal communication).

The most popular janda bālā kardan ritual is the one which is performed at the shrine of Ali in Mazar-i-Sharif. Its central feature is the erection of a 75 foot high iron pole. The pole is crowned with a silver gubba to which colourful scarves have been tied and it is wrapped all the way down in bright green silk (this and the scarves are the gifts of wealthy devotees of the shrine). In the days leading up to Naw Ruz pilgrims arrive in the city from all over Afghanistan and as far away as Pakistan and India. The blind and lame in particular hope that they will be successful in persuading Ali to intercede for them. The close connection between Ali, the janda ceremony and the cure of blindness is expressed in this song which is sung everywhere in the city at Naw Ruz:-

"Rūz-i-Naw Rūz ast,	(today is New Year's Day,
Khudā jān,	beloved Lord,
Janda bālā mīshawad,	the standard is raised,
Az karāmat-i-sakhi jān,	through the miraculous
Kūr bīnā mīshawad"	power of beloved Ali,
	the blind are cured).

(Einzmann 1977:93)

The city's hotels and lodging houses are packed with guests. Stalls selling all sorts of snacks are put up around the shrine, and story-tellers, astrologers, jugglers, magicians and beggars gather there; amulet sellers do a brisk trade. Three big circus tents attract large crowds at night. Inside the shrine itself, rawzas are delivered, and recitations of the Koran and religious chanting by Sufis, malangs and other religious enthusiasts are punctuated by loud cries of "ya Ali" and "Allah ho". Others walk round and round the shrine building in the hope of being cured of some affliction or simply to bring good luck for the year to come; the shrine should be circumambulated forty times. Others, mostly women, stand at the doors of the grills surrounding the tombs and weep. They shake the locks and chains so as to arouse the dead saints and persuade them to intercede for them. Others simply wait near the tomb absorbing its baraka.

On New Year's Day itself, at about nine o'clock in the morning, the ritual of raising the janda begins. Crowds pour into the shrine, though the inner courtyard and the area around the platform upon which the janda is raised are reserved for V.I.P.'s. Among these are senior government officials and eminent religious figures.

There is an invocation from the Koran, and various short speeches punctuated by music from a military brass band. The Military Commandant of Balkh province of which Mazar-i-Sharif is the capital conveys messages of good will from the President or Prime Minister; King Zaher Shah sometimes attended in person before his abdication in 1973. A prayer requesting a good year for the people and the government is spoken usually by the provincial governor, then the janda is raised. The crowd watches anxiously because any difficulties which occur during the pole's erection presage problems in the year to come. The pole lies in an inclined position, its base on the platform, the top towards the shrine's mosque. The shrine attendants pull it upright with ropes.

Once the janda is upright the dignitaries and officials leave and the crowd begins to assault it. Young men try to climb up it, and everyone tries to touch it and if possible to snatch a fragment of the cloth with which it is wrapped which is charged with baraka. They rub their caps against it in order to absorb more baraka. Though the janda remains standing for forty days, touching it just after it has been raised is most efficacious. Quite often the enthusiasm is such that fences are torn down and people are hurt in the scramble to reach it. Outside the shrine many animals are slaughtered before or after the ceremony, and the meat

is shared with the other pilgrims².

The ritual of raising the standard at the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul on New Year's Day is very similar, though everything is on a smaller scale. The janda is likewise wrapped in expensive cloth while its top is decorated with gaudy ribbons and artificial flowers. After it has been raised there is the same rush to touch the pole, and tear off a piece of cloth or touch it with a scrap of material one has brought oneself which will absorb some of the baraka and can equally well be used as an amulet. As at Mazar-i-Sharif the atmosphere is a festive one and a large crowd gathers to spend a few hours on the open space below the shrine. For many it is a chance for a family outing. As well as visiting the shrine, children enjoy rides on the ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds and the men practise their marksmanship by shooting air rifles at special targets. Tambourines, wooden rattles and other cheap toys are on sale, gypsy women sell jewellery and all sorts of snacks and soft drinks can be bought (Einzmann 1977:121).

(footnote²: a festival associated with red flowers, tulips (L. Dupree 1973:105) or roses (Adamec 1979:411-12) also occurred at Mazar-i-Sharif at or soon after Naw Ruz. There are Central Asian parallels here, for example with the flower festival associated with the famous shrine of Baha-ud-din outside Bukhara (Castagne 1951:91).)



The Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul at Naw Ruz, 1979. The pole on the left-hand side of the shrine building with a red flag near the top appears to be the janda which had been raised earlier in the day. On the right-hand side of the picture can be seen the crowd enjoying the holiday atmosphere on the open space below the shrine.



The shrine of Padshah Sahib, a few miles from Kabul; he is said to have been a famous Sufi who died trying to defend the local people from the depredations of the soldiers of Nadir Shah Afshar in the early eighteenth century. Ibex horns have been placed on either side of the brightly painted headstone. Strings and scraps of cloth have been tied to the poles and hundreds of nails have been driven into the fence pole in the bottom left-hand corner of the picture.

Naw Ruz is a popular time for visiting shrines in Afghanistan, whether or not a janda is raised at them (see e.g. N.H. Dupree 1967:94). It can also be a popular time for visiting some of the Iranian shrines, especially Qom (Bazin 1973:87) but the janda bālā kardan ritual does not appear to take place there. According to Vladimir Basilov (personal communication), rituals bearing some resemblance to the janda bālā kardan exist or existed in what is now Soviet Central Asia. At many of the popular shrines in Khiva a special pole (tūgh), to the top of which a white flag was attached, used to stand. On New Year's Day, the tūgh was lowered, the white flag (known as an 'alam') was replaced by a fresh one, and the pole was raised again. The origins of this and the janda bālā kardan ritual are mysterious but appear to be pre-Islamic. The most interesting aspect from our point of view is perhaps the importance attached to the correct raising of the janda. Any mishap or difficulty which arises at this point is said to bode ill for the coming year, whereas if the ceremony is performed correctly, rain will fall, crops will ripen, and in general the year will be a good one. Whatever its origins therefore the janda's shape and the fact that it is raised at the beginning of spring suggest that it is a powerful symbol of fertility. The ritual with which it is associated thus has two aspects. On the one hand it creates an especially powerful source of baraka which may be tapped by individuals. On the other it is a ritual on the correct performance of which depends the prosperity of the country during the coming year.

As noted above, the ritual of 'raising the standard' appears to be confined to shrines in northern Afghanistan. However, the performance of other collective rituals at Iranian shrines was reported by several early European travellers. According to Olearius, for example, who visited the country in the seventeenth century, solemn pilgrimages were made once a year to the tomb of Tiribabba (pīr-i-bābā or 'venerable mystic' perhaps) near the village of Pyrmaraas. The tomb was covered with a new cloth and the old one was pulled to pieces which were distributed among the pilgrims (Masse' 1938:396). However, apart from the rawzas and sufras mentioned above, the only contemporary example of a collective ritual I have come across at an Iranian shrine is the qālī shūyān (literally 'carpet washing') at the shrine of Shahzada Sultan Ali, a son of the fifth Imam, Muhammad Baqir, at Mashad Ardehal, a village west of Kashan, about a hundred miles south of Tehran.

Shahzada Sultan Ali is believed to have been brutally murdered, stabbed or beaten to death, not far away, and as well as his supposed tomb the shrine contains a large carpet in which his body is said to have been wrapped and taken to the nearby river to be washed before being buried. The qālī shūyān takes place in September each year and is attended by a large number of pilgrims from all over Iran. On the appointed day the carpet is taken out of the shrine with great ceremony and carried to the banks of the river half a mile away where it is placed on a special framework. Here it is beaten with sticks and washed before being returned reverently

to the shrine (Boloukbashi 1971, see also Massé 1938: 396). On one level the ritual re-enacts the washing and burial of Shahzada Sultan Ali's corpse, thereby focusing attention on his brutal murder and allowing those present to identify with his suffering and gain religious merit by doing so. On another level the qālī shūyān may perhaps be understood as a ritual of collective expurgation in which the carpet becomes a kind of scapegoat. By beating and washing it in the river the pilgrims' sins are dispersed and destroyed.

b. personal ritual at shrines:-

The other rituals performed at shrines in Iran and Afghanistan are of a much more personal nature. They may be said to comprise three sorts of activity, firstly, attracting the saint's attention and encouraging him to help with one's problem, secondly, making gifts to him, his shrine and people gathered there, and thirdly, absorbing the shrine's baraka directly. It can sometimes be difficult to say whether a particular practice belongs in one or other category. Some of the rituals by means of which the saint's attention is drawn to a suppliant's problem in the first place, for example, cannot always be readily distinguished from simple gift-giving. On the whole, however, making and discharging a vow are two distinct operations and a separate ritual is connected with each. One draws the saint's attention to the problem by some suitable means and vows to bring a gift or perform a charitable deed if he solves it, and when he

has done so one makes one's offering (Canaan 1927:130, B.A. Donaldson 1938:66, Massé 1938:393-4, Einzmann 1977:100-1). The principle behind most of the rituals designed to attract the saint's attention and persuade him to intercede for one appears to be that of homeopathic magic, or metaphor, while it is mostly through contagious magic or metonymy that the pilgrims absorb the shrine's baraka directly (Frazer 1922:12, Leach 1970:49).

I. persuading the saint to intercede

The most common way of doing this is by tying rags, scraps of cloth, threads and pieces of string to the grill surrounding the saint's tomb, to poles set up around it, or trees standing within the precincts of the shrine, or anything else in it which will serve the purpose (B.A. Donaldson 1938:66, Massé 1938:395, Einzmann 1977:52, Poulton 1979 I:62, Brooks 1981:7). Among the 'natural' shrines, trees in particular are often festooned with rags (see e.g. Spooner 1963:89)³.

(footnote³: Tying rags to sacred trees was very common in Central Asia (Poulton 1979 I:161) while the custom of tying a scrap of cloth to a shrine usually as the accompaniment to a vow is widely reported in the Islamic world, for example in Palestine (Canaan 1927:103-4), Egypt (Kriss 1960:39), Morocco (Eickelmann 1981:231), and northern India (Jeffery 1979b:7).)

In Iran these scraps of cloth are known as dakhīl and the custom is referred to as dakhīl bastan, literally 'tying the request for help' (Alberts 1963:883, Betteridge 1981:44). The primary purpose of the ritual is to draw the saint's attention to a problem one has brought for him to solve, and it is often accompanied by a vow (nazr) to make a gift to the shrine or to the poor at the shrine if it is dealt with successfully (Einzmann 1977:52-3)⁴.

The knotted rag is the visible sign of the pilgrim's request. It 'captures' the request as it were, attaching it firmly to the shrine. It also ties or binds the saint to pay attention to the request, as well as binding the pilgrim to carry out his part of the bargain by fulfilling his vow when his request is granted. At some shrines, particularly Mashad, people take these ideas to their logical conclusion by actually tying themselves to the grill surrounding the tomb, saying that they will not leave until their request has been granted (Thaiss 1973:180, Betteridge personal communication). The knotted rag may also symbolise the knot, the impasse in the pilgrim's life with which he wants the saint's

(footnote⁴: It should be pointed out that as in Europe (see e.g. Finucane 1977:34) a vow to a saint need not necessarily be made at the shrine itself. The nineteenth century pilgrim, Nurullah Khan, for example, embarked on the journey to Mashad because he had promised the Imam Reza he would do so if his family were saved from an outbreak of cholera which was then sweeping through the city of Kerman (Sykes 1910:165, see also Betteridge 1980:144).)

assistance (Einzmann 1977:52-3, Betteridge 1981:14). In fact, pilgrims to Mashad believe that when the saint has answered the request associated with a knotted rag, the knot will untie itself and the rag will fall to the floor. Thus, visitors to the shrine will rub their hands over the cloths in order to dislodge one or two of them and thereby help a fellow pilgrim get his or her wish (Naipaul 1981:67).

A similar sort of ritual consists of knocking nails into any wooden part of a shrine, or into a tree if there is one within its precincts, or driving pegs into the ground around the tomb. This custom appears to be confined to Afghanistan; though it is forbidden at the more expensively decorated ziyārats, many of the simpler ones bristle with nails. As with tying a rag, driving a nail into a shrine is a way of drawing a saint's attention to a particular request and often accompanies a vow. The ideas behind it are likewise analogous to those of tying or binding the saint and the pilgrim which are associated with attaching a rag to a shrine. Thus driving in a nail firmly fixes the request to the shrine, forcibly bringing it to the saint's attention. Its strong anchoring symbolises the firmness with which it is desired. However, hammering nails can also have more concrete applications such as getting rid of a headache or toothache. While praying to the saint for relief from the ailment, one touches the sore point and simultaneously drives in the nail or peg with the other hand. In this way the pain passes out of the sufferer and is trapped or destroyed, 'pinned down' as it were, in the

shrine. One can also hammer a nail or peg into a shrine to prevent a loved one from going away on a long journey, or to win a person's affections. The custom appears to be open to a number of interpretations based on the notion of fixing something firmly (L. Dupree 1976:4, Einzmann 1977:62-3). I was once told that it was a good way of silencing a nagging wife!

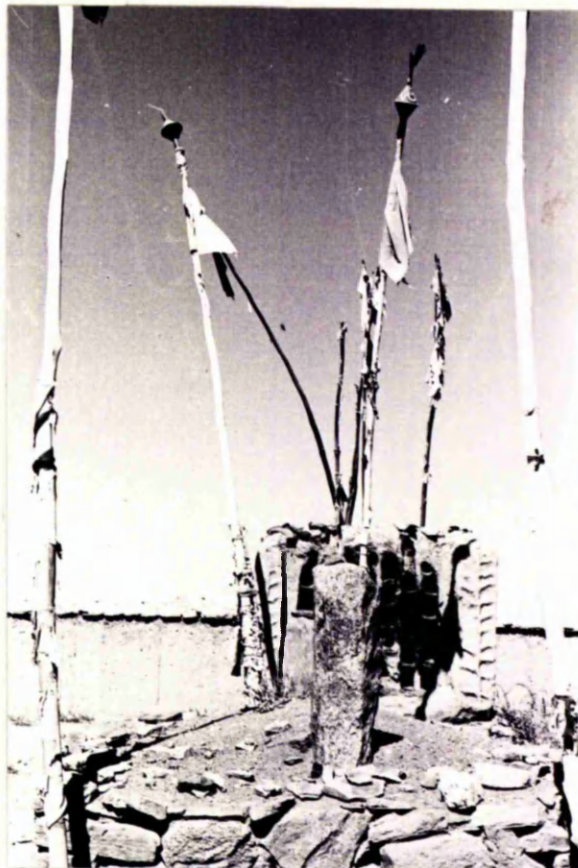
Another custom which appears to have the same kinds of meaning is that of fixing a padlock to the grill around a tomb, or to the heavy chain which is sometimes hung over the door to the room containing the tomb itself. It appears to be widely distributed in Iran but to be confined in Afghanistan to Shi'ite shrines (Einzmann 1977:64-5, Betteridge 1981:15, Naipaul 1981:18). Once again the idea of fixing one's request to the shrine and binding the saint to fulfil it seem to be uppermost. Rattling as well as touching and kissing the chains to which the padlocks are attached is reported to be both an expression of reverence and a means of reminding the saint that he has not yet dealt with one's problem (Sykes 1910:243, Alberts 1963:880, Einzmann 1977:65)⁵.

(footnote⁵: the procedures for attracting the saint's attention we have examined so far are fairly widespread; a more unusual way of ensuring that a saint will listen to one's request reported at two shrines in the Kabul area is lifting a heavy stone ball three times above one's head (Einzmann 1977:175, 251, see also N.H. Dupree 1971:94). Similarly at the shrine of Bibi Shahrbanu outside Rayy women hold three stones as they make their wishes (Fischer 1973:208).)



Entrance to the walled enclosure of a shrine near Kabul. Horns have been placed over the gate; a panja has been attached to the tip of the one on the right-hand side. Qubbas have been fixed to the tops of two of the poles inside the enclosure.

The grave itself inside the enclosure. The foot of the grave is marked by the large stone in the foreground. Rags have been tied to the poles. Candles are burned in the honeycomb structure behind the headstone.



Another practice which, like attaching padlocks to chains, appears to be restricted to Shi'ite shrines is writing to the saint. This has the sanction of the seventeenth century theologian Majlisi who in his pilgrimage manual the Gift for Pilgrims gave an accepted form for a short letter in Arabic which anyone can write or have written and sent to the Twelfth Imam. "It may be placed on the tomb of any of the Imams, or it may be fastened and sealed and covered with clean earth and cast into the sea or into a deep well. In any case it will reach the Hidden Imam and he will give it his personal attention" (D.M. Donaldson 1933:235-6). Gulick describes this procedure as he observed it at a well in Isfahan consecrated to the Twelfth or Hidden Imam (1976:173-4, see also Betteridge 1981:14).

Most of the rituals designed to attract a saint's attention which we have been examining are not associated with any particular type of request. In one or two instances, however, a particular ritual is associated with a particular goal, and involves acting out some feature of it. Thus in both Iran and Afghanistan, a woman who is unable to conceive may make a tiny model of a cradle with a baby inside it out of bits of string and cloth. She then carries it around the shrine in order, it is said, to convince the saint of the depth of her longing for a child (L. Dupree 1973:105, Einzmann 1977:53, Betteridge 1981:16, Wutt 1981:98). A particular ritual may also be associated with a particular shrine as well as a particular goal. Pilgrimage to the tomb of Shahzada Sultan Ali at Mashad Ardehal, for example, is particularly popular with parents who have a daughter

of marriageable age and are anxious for her to be married. In order to bring this about they go to the bazaar which is set up there at the time of the qālī shūyān and buy a number of objects which they hope will eventually form part of her dowry (Boloukbashi 1971:140).

A prayer addressed to the saint almost always accompanies the performance of any of these rituals. Such a prayer is usually referred to as a du'ā in order to distinguish it from the obligatory daily prayers (namāz) which may be performed in a mosque (Spooner 1963: 86, Einzmann 1977:97). The du'ā is likely to be of a more or less personal nature, since it usually refers to an individual's particular circumstances and to some problem with which he or she wants the saint's assistance. The intercession of saints has become such a central feature of the Shi'ite tradition, however, that the Shi'ite theologians have written down a large number of very lengthy prayers which they recommend pilgrims should use at the shrines of the Imams and imāmzādas (D.M. Donaldson 1933:346). Many of the bigger shrines display a ziyārat nāma in a prominent position; this is a plaque which gives details of the pedigree and life of the saint concerned and the forms of address to be used by visitors to his shrine (Massé 1938:387, Alberts 1963:882). By repeating these prayers or listening to a rawza the Shi'ite pilgrim hopes to find a hāl-i-khush, literally a 'happy state' of mind, in which he weeps with true repentance, humility and devotion for the Imams, and thereby gains religious merit (Fischer 1980:100).

II gift giving

As we saw above, gift-giving is often the second phase of a process initiated by a vow and the performance of one of the rituals for drawing a saint's attention to a problem which were described in the previous section. Gift-giving can also be simply an expression of devotion to the saint. A particularly generous gift, for example towards the cost of decorating a shrine, may be recorded on a plaque on the wall or on the headstone of the saint's tomb so that it can also be a way of increasing one's prestige in the community (Einzmann 1977:42).

In some cases, a particular nazri (ex-voto) may be regarded as appropriate for help with a particular type of problem. Thus people who suffer from sore eyes are said to vow to place a pair of silver eyes on the door post of the room containing the Imam Reza's tomb at Mashad if their trouble is cured (B.A. Donaldson 1938: 66). In Shiraz a woman who wishes to bear a child may go to the shrine of Shah Qays, a son of the Imam Reza, and make a miniature cradle and baby as described at the end of the previous section. "If her request is answered, the nazri ... is shir berenj, a kind of rice pudding" (Betteridge 1981:16). Betteridge (ibid) also draws attention to the fact that a petitioner at a shrine in making a vow sometimes implies a comparison between his or her circumstances and those of the saint concerned. It is hoped that the analogy will persuade the saint to intercede with God on his or her behalf. A good example

of this occurs in connection with the shrine of Sayyid Ala ul-din Husain in Shiraz which is regarded by the city's inhabitants as a good place to take a sick or injured child, largely, it would appear, because the saint himself is believed to have been brutally murdered as a child, and is thus particularly sympathetic to suffering children.

The most appropriate ex-voto for this saint is known as the Sufra-i-Hazrat-i-Ruqqiyeh. Ruqqiyeh was the youngest daughter of the Imam Husain, and was only a few years old when her father was defeated and killed at the battle of Kerbela. She is said to have been taken to Damascus where she was shown her father's severed head by her captors and died immediately afterwards. The sufra or 'cloth' spread in her name in fulfilment of a vow to Sayyid Ala ul-din Husain in Shiraz consists of a number of items arranged on a cloth laid out on the ground at his shrine which recall Ruqqiyeh's tragic story. A brick for example represents either the prison in which she was held or the pillow she was given there. Bread and dates are the only foods placed on the sufra. A special rawza may be given as well which has Ruqqiyeh's story as its main focus. "In vowing to give this particular combination of foods and rowzeh sermon at the imamzadeh, the petitioner compares the plight of the afflicted child for whom the vow is made to that of Seyyed Ala ul-din Husain and Hazrat-i-Ruqqiyeh. Each is young and a victim of tragic circumstances" (Betteridge 1981:17-8).

In some cases it happens that a particular ex-voto is regarded as being appropriate for a particular saint whatever the request he may have granted. Thus in Shiraz a common way for women to seek a favour from Hazrat Abbas, the Imam Husain's half brother and a popular Shi'ite saint, who has a shrine in the city, is to promise to sponsor a ritual dinner, including a rawza and a sufra in his name. The dinner need not in fact be given at the shrine (Betteridge 1980:145-6, see also Fischer 1978:204).

Usually however no particular ex-voto is regarded as being especially appropriate in this way. An offering of food for the poor, however simple, is probably the most popular way for a vow to be discharged since it is one which is within almost everybody's reach. In Afghanistan the food, usually a kind of stew or hot pot, or freshly-baked bread, can often be prepared using the cooking places which, as we saw in chapter three, are provided at many shrines. Otherwise cooked food is brought to the shrine and distributed to those present, especially the needy. Because of the expense, slaughtering an animal at or outside a shrine and sharing the meat amongst the pilgrims counts as one of the most highly valued ex-voto offerings. These distributions of food are known as khayrāt ('acts of charity'). Gifts of money to the poor at a shrine may also be made in fulfilment of a vow (Masse' 1938:396, Einzmann 1977:101-3, Brooks 1981:15).

Other gifts are mostly made to the shrine itself rather than to those who happen to be present there. It is customary to leave a small gift on every visit, such as a handful of raisins, mulberries or chickpeas, a handkerchief or a small coin (Alberts 1963: 882, Einzmann 1977:101). As we saw above, some objects serve both to draw a saint's attention to a request and to accompany a vow, and as gifts or ex-votos, so that it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish the two uses. Lighting candles in honour of a saint is a good example of this. It may underline the urgency of a request or wish, discharge a vow or simply show one's regard for a saint (Masse' 1938:395, Alberts 1963:883, Einzmann 1977: 61).

The number of stones found at many of the simpler shrines, especially in Afghanistan, is striking; they may lie in heaps or in rows on the grave itself, in niches, in corners and on ledges. Sometimes cord or wire is wound round them and they are hung up around the grave or from the branches of a nearby tree. They too can be concrete tokens of a request and a vow, as well as simply gifts and evidence that one has visited the shrine; each stone left at a shrine will testify on the Day of Judgement to the religiosity of the person who brought it there (L. Dupree 1976:15, Einzmann 1977:59-60, Brooks 1981:6-7).

In fact, most of the objects to be found at shrines are the gifts of their devotees. In Afghanistan these include the horns, sometimes complete with skulls,

of wild deer, antelope and wild and domestic goats and sheep. Ostensibly these horns are gifts to saints in return for help they have extended (L. Dupree 1970:351-2, Huwyler 1979:137). In Snasarev's view, however, the fact that they are so often placed by the entrance to a shrine shows they have a protective function as well. Because the saint himself is perfectly capable of protecting his ziyārat from the intrusion of jinns and other hostile spirits, he believes that the custom has pre-Islamic origins (1977a:14, see also 1977b:13). L. Dupree (1973: 118) links the custom with what he calls the "cult of the mountain goat", which he suggests goes back at least as far as Mousterian times in the Middle East and Central Asia. However the fact that the horns of other animals than goats are often found at shrines suggests that whatever the origin of this custom may have been, it was more than simply a goat cult.

Other objects which people quite often give to shrines in Afghanistan are flags or banners (ālām), panjas and qubbās. These are fixed at or near the tops of poles specially set up around the tomb or at the entrance to the shrine building. The flags can be of almost any colour, though red seems most popular. In the last chapter I pointed out that Iranian pilgrims traditionally appear to have worn red scarves and carried red banners. Red is generally an auspicious colour in Afghanistan too; for example small red flags are placed on walls and roofs to keep off the evil eye. The flags found at shrines are often triangular in shape and may be embroidered with the names of Allah, Muhammad and Ali and

prayer formulae such bismilla, and the kalima and fātiha. Their flapping in the breeze is a continuous reminder of someone's generosity and means that the prayers embroidered on them are constantly being recited. They may, Einzmann (1977:51) suggests, be compared with the prayer flags of Buddhist Tibet.

Another gift which may be made to a shrine is a panja (hand). This is a stylised two-dimensional hand made of sheet metal which is attached to the top of a pole. Although the open hand is a widespread symbol, it appears to be found at shrines in this form only in Afghanistan and occasionally in Central Asia (see e.g. Olufsen 1911:402)⁶. In Iran the panja is or was often carried in Muharram processions (see e.g. Thaiss 1973:284). In Afghanistan it most often represents the hand of Ali, though in Iran it tends to stand for the panj-tān, the five most revered members of the Prophet's family, Muhammad himself, Ali, Husain, Hasan and Fatima (L. Dupree 1970:351, Thaiss 1973:284, Morton 1975:41, Einzmann 1977:48). At the shrine of Padshah Sahib at Pai Minar near Kabul, I was told by the mutawallī that the panja symbolised the saint's generosity. No doubt it does, but a more obvious interpretation of a raised and outspread hand is a warning to stop or keep off. Just so the panja's main function at shrines does indeed seem to be to ward off evil spirits and malign influences in

(footnote⁶: in Central Asia its place often seems to have been taken by the tūgh, a pole carrying a horse's or yak's tail at the top (Castagne 1951:48).)

general. Thus during several cholera epidemics in Afghanistan bloodstained panjas from the local ziyārat are said to have been found scattered around a village following which the epidemic ceased. The blood came from the jinns in whom diseases like cholera are personified. Though invisible they are believed to bleed like ordinary creatures (Einzmann 1977:49-50).

The qubba, another object of which a gift may be made to a shrine, whether in fulfilment of a vow or not, is also fixed to the top of a pole either on its own or combined with a panja. Qubba originally meant a dome or vault. It now also refers to the spherical, conical, pear or drop-shaped objects the smaller examples of which are fixed to the tops of poles at shrines, while the larger ones crown a dome or tower, or the corners of the roof, of a ziyārat or mosque. The ones attached to poles are, like the panjas, usually cut from sheet metal and like them they have a protective as well as a decorative function. The expensive cloths with which the saints' tombs at the better-equipped shrines tend to be draped are also gifts, and it is regarded as a great privilege to be allowed to bestow one upon a shrine (Einzmann 1977:49-52). Many of the doves which are found in large numbers at the more popular shrines were originally donated by visitors too (see e.g. B.A. Donaldson 1938:18, Einzmann 1977:71-3)⁷.

(footnote⁷: Doves are associated with the Prophet Muhammad and Abraham's son Ishmael, supposed ancestor of the Arabs, as well as with the Prophet Noah (Genesis:8) (Einzmann 1977:71).)

Wealthier enthusiasts, as well as leaving expensive gifts such as cloths and even jewellery at shrines, may make substantial contributions towards the costs of building, maintaining and decorating them. The main building of the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi in Kabul, for example, was erected at the behest of the wife of Amir Abd al-Rahman towards the end of the last century, while the rest of it was built by a local notable named Mian Ji Sahib (Einzmann 1977:124-5). We saw in chapter three that another way of winning the favour of a saint is to endow his shrine with property (vaqf). The shrine in this way enjoys the income from the property without paying the usual taxes upon it. However, I pointed out that during the twentieth century the state in both Iran and Afghanistan has attempted to exercise much stricter control over vaqf property than hitherto. Largely as a result it would appear, the practice of endowing shrines in this way has in Iran at any rate become very rare (see e.g. Fischer 1980:117), though as we saw in chapter three the shrines at Mashad and Qom in particular still own extensive properties.

To conclude this section, it is worth mentioning a custom which may very loosely be said to constitute a kind of gift-giving associated with a shrine. This consists of 'binding' a person to a shrine. If a saint helps a person several times, he may decide to 'tie' (bastan) his whole family to the saint's shrine even if it is some distance away and visit it regularly. The saint becomes the family's patron, almost its household deity. If the family requests male offspring from the

saint it vows to dedicate any boys born to him. A ring worn in one ear is the sign that a person has been consecrated to a saint in this way. Slaves used to wear a ring in one ear, and the 'bound' person is thus regarded as the slave of the saint (B.A. Donaldson 1938: 32, Einzmann 1977:104-5, Betteridge 1981:20). A variation of this is known as kākul-i-nazri, and involves placing a male infant under a saint's protection for the first seven or eight years of his life, after which he is circumcised. This is an important step towards his becoming a full Muslim and gives him some of the protection against jinns and other evil influences which had previously been supplied by the saint. A vow is made that if the saint protects the boy until he reaches this stage, then an appropriate gift will be made at his shrine. As a sign of this, a plait of hair is woven at the back of the boy's head and this is left while the rest of the scalp is fully shaven and cut regularly (B.A. Donaldson 1938:26, Einzmann 1977:56).

III absorbing the shrine's baraka directly

Geertz (1968:44) rightly points out that baraka is more than just a kind of paraphysical force or spiritual electricity. As we saw in chapter one it is a beneficent force of divine origin which Allah bestows or withholds as he pleases. Nevertheless a number of rituals associated with shrines do make sense if we think of them as intended to acquire through physical contact the baraka which is believed to be more or less continually

and automatically released by the shrines (see e.g. Gulick 1976:127).

It is apparent from the efforts pilgrims make to touch and kiss the grills which protect the tombs of the more famous saints, and often the locks of the doors in particular, that at least on one level baraka works like a kind of contagious magic. In fact a pilgrimage to Mashad or Kerbela may actually be referred to as "touching the locks" of the shrine (Masse' 1938:392, B.A. Donaldson 1938:66, Alberts 1963:882, Einzmann 1977:98). At the simpler shrines people touch and gently stroke the saints' grave mounds, rubbing afflicted limbs against them and even sitting and lying on them. At qadam gāhs and nazar gāhs they try to touch the saints' footprints or the trees or rocks which are their main attractions⁸. The water at shrines with springs or wells is also usually believed to contain baraka. Hence pregnant women, for example, may bathe their abdomens in water drawn at a shrine in order to improve their chances of a trouble-free delivery, while bathing the breasts makes the milk more copious and nourishing after the baby is born (Einzmann 1977:35). At some shrines the keeper may imbue water with baraka by breathing on and saying prayers over it (op. cit. :48).

(footnote⁸: In the same way some pilgrims in medieval England "experienced relief simply by viewing the shrine or touching it, but the more determined (ones) ... slept - or tried to - on the tomb itself" (Finucane 1977:89).)

The longer the pilgrim stays near the tomb the more baraka he should absorb. Hence in Afghanistan the mentally ill and epileptics in particular are likely to be shut up within the precincts of a shrine for a long time or even tied to a grave in order to improve the chances of a cure (op. cit. :103). The contagious quality of baraka is dramatically illustrated by the way in which anyone who is believed to have experienced a cure at a shrine will probably have his clothes torn to shreds by the other pilgrims as they rush to snatch a fragment of them. His clothing is believed to share the baraka which has been granted to him and of which his cure is the evidence (B.A. Donaldson 1938:67, Thaiss 1973:180, Poulton 1979 I:323). The belief that baraka is more or less constantly emitted from a saint's tomb is the reason why it is still regarded as being desirable to be buried at or near a shrine. It greatly increases a person's chances of being admitted to paradise. As we saw in chapter three the most extensive cemeteries are on the whole associated with the Shi'ite shrines, though Sunnis believe in the value of burial near a saint's tomb too.

Another way of acquiring baraka or rather of storing some up is to touch the tomb or relic with something or leave something on or next to it for a while. The object thus acquires baraka which can be used in various ways. In the Kabul area pregnant women try to protect their unborn children by tying strings or threads which have been in contact with a shrine around their waists. Such threads may be used to combat various

illnesses. A blue thread for example is believed to be particularly efficacious for a child with whooping cough both because the colour blue has a protective character, and also because it is the colour of the child's face when it is coughing (Einzmann 1977:53, see also B.A. Donaldson 1938:65, Canaan 1927:107, 113). Homeopathic and contagious principles are thus combined in this treatment.

A variation of this is actually leaving an item of clothing or a thread from it at a shrine for good. This is most common with small children partly perhaps because they are particularly vulnerable to disease and illness. Since they have been in close physical contact with the child, such pieces of clothing make good symbolic substitutes for him. When they are left at a shrine baraka is channelled to their former owner (Einzmann 1977:53-4). For the same reason people visiting the shrine at Mashad are said to pull hairs from their heads or their beards, wrap them in paper and throw upon the Imam Reza's tomb. "They think that by virtue of some part of themselves being near the saint they too will partake of his favour, in renewed vigour or in restoration to health from some malady" (B.A. Donaldson 1938:66).

Other rituals involve taking away from the shrine something which belonged to it in the first place and thus possesses baraka. Among the most popular souvenirs bought by pilgrims to Mashad, for example, are prayer tablets (muhr/singular), upon which they put their

foreheads during prayer, which are made from clay extracted near the shrine (B.A. Donaldson 1938:65). This custom appears to have been copied from the shrine at Kerbela where the sale of tablets made from the soil with which the blood of the Imam Husain has supposedly mingled is carried on on a large scale (D.M. Donaldson 1933:89). Removing earth and dust from a shrine (which also occurred in medieval England (Finucane 1977:89)) is reportedly a widespread custom. At the foot of many of the simpler Afghan shrines, for instance, are to be found deep hollows from which earth has been extracted (Einzmann 1977:99). At Mashad and Qom even the dust which collected around the tombs is reported to have been swept up by the attendants and sold to pilgrims in small quantities (B.A. Donaldson 1938:67, Massé 1938:393). The dust and earth can be rubbed on diseased parts of the body, or it can be eaten if one is suffering from some illness, and people often keep a small quantity of it for these purposes (see e.g. L. Dupree 1973:105, Einzmann 1977:99). It is also worth noting that dust and earth from the most famous places of Islamic pilgrimage are rubbed on corpses in order that they may be identified as true believers and protected from God's punishment on the Day of Judgement (Sykes 1910:113, Einzmann 1977:99).

It should also be pointed out that where the layout permits it is fairly common for ritual at shrines to include walking around the tomb a certain number of times. According to Einzmann, one should avoid anything which might suggest that the tawāf, the circumambulation of the Ka'ba at Mecca, which is performed seven times by

the pilgrim performing the 'umra, is being imitated (Einzmann 1977:100). This has not prevented the custom of circumambulating saints' tombs becoming firmly established (see e.g. Alberts 1963:882). As we saw above, it is common practice to walk forty times around the shrine building at Mazar-i-Sharif in order to absorb more of the shrine's baraka. At Mashad it appears to have been customary to circumambulate the tomb of the Imam Reza three times (Sykes 1910:257). In the Kabul area, some shrines specialise in curing sick animals, and such an animal is customarily led around one of them three times (Einzmann 1977:100, see also Spooner 1963:88).

Finally, it is worth pointing out that at a few of the smaller shrines a number of rather more unusual customs persist which appear in some way or other to be based on the idea of acquiring baraka through contact with objects found at them. At the shrine of Khaja Musafer outside Kabul (see p.60), for example, new-born babies are passed three times through fissures in the trunk of a rotten tree. This is supposed to protect them from all manner of ills (Einzmann 1977:223, for another example see Byron 1981:110). A curious ritual is that of passing under or sometimes over a chain or rope. At the shrine of Ofian Sahib for example a victim of rabies is made to crawl three times under a chain held out by the attendants, kissing it each time (Einzmann 1977:65). At the cave shrine of Pir Qar in Bakhtiari territory in western Iran, a string of beads, bells and stones is suspended across the walls of the cave. A sick child

will be carried over and under it seven times (Brooks 1981:12).

Summary:-

In this chapter the rituals which appear to be most commonly performed at Islamic shrines in Iran and Afghanistan were described and some suggestions were made as to how they might best be understood. Most of them, as Spooner and Betteridge have pointed out, are performed by individual pilgrims for their own personal ends, but some collective ritual occurs at a few shrines. Firstly, rawzas, Koran recitations and religious singing go on at many of the bigger Shi'ite shrines, particularly at New Year and in the months of Ramadan and Muharram. Secondly, rituals to avert some threat to the community such as drought or disease are or used to be performed at some shrines. Thirdly, at a number of other shrines collective rituals are performed regularly and not just in response to some communal threat. In particular a ritual known as janda bālā kardan (raising the standard) is conducted on or soon after New Year's Day at shrines in several towns and cities in northern Afghanistan. When the janda is raised it becomes a powerful source of baraka which can be tapped by the individual pilgrim but it has a wider significance as well. The janda is a potent symbol of fertility, and if it is raised correctly, a prosperous year is believed to be in store for people and government.

The ritual which individual visitors to shrines perform for their own purposes was examined under three headings according to the particular purpose it is designed to serve. These are, firstly, encouraging the saint buried at or otherwise associated with a shrine to attend to one's problem, secondly, showing one's devotion to the saint by making gifts to (or at his shrine, and thirdly, absorbing the baraka of the shrine directly. The rituals for drawing a saint's attention to one's problem and making a gift often form two stages of one process. This is because, as with much ritual associated with Roman Catholic shrines, the most common way of encouraging the saint to intercede on one's behalf is to promise to make a gift if he does so. In some cases, lighting candles for example, the same ritual may serve either function, though not usually in the same instance. In most cases, however, it is possible to distinguish the rituals connected with each stage of the process, though it can be difficult to be absolutely precise about their functions. The principal purpose of tying a rag to some part of a shrine, for example, is to draw a saint's attention to a request and induce him to help with it, but because the scrap of cloth has been in contact with the petitioner it may also serve to transmit some baraka to him directly. Nevertheless, although contagious magic may well play a peripheral role in some of the rituals designed to attract a saint's attention, I suggested that these rituals principally rely on homeopathic magic or metaphor whereas contagious magic or metonymy is characteristic of the rituals which are believed to enable the visitor to absorb the shrine's baraka directly.

Apart from knotting rags, other common rituals for persuading the saint to intercede on one's behalf are hammering nails or pegs into some part of the shrine and attaching padlocks to grills or chains. The rags, nails and locks are all tangible signs of a request and usually a vow as well. They also as it were 'fix' the request to the shrine, constraining the saint to answer it and binding the petitioner to fulfil his side of the bargain. As far as gift-giving at a shrine is concerned, in a few cases a particular ex-voto is regarded as the appropriate recompense for having solved a particular type of problem. On the whole however a gift of food made to the poor at a shrine appears to be the most common kind of ex-voto whatever the saint may have been asked to do by the pilgrim. Among the more costly gifts which may be made to shrines are the panjas, qubbas and flags which make the Afghan shrine in particular a distinctive feature of the landscape. The wealthier devotees of saints may still pay for the construction, maintenance and decoration of their shrines, but the practice of making land or other productive resources over to them so that they may enjoy their revenues free of tax appears to have almost entirely ceased.

Finally, the rituals by means of which the baraka of the shrine may be attracted directly mostly revolve around the idea of coming into physical contact with the tomb or nazar gāh of the saint. In particular I drew attention to the way in which pilgrims try and get as close as possible to the saint's tomb or footprint. Variations on the idea of making contact with the source

of baraka are taking something away which has absorbed some of it, such as dust or earth, and leaving something with which a person has been in contact such as a piece of clothing or a few hairs. The object left at the shrine absorbs its baraka and passes it back to its erstwhile owner.

Chapter Six Reasons for Visiting Shrines

"The rich pilgrimage for pleasure, the middle classes for trade, the readers of the Koran from hypocrisy (to be heard and seen), the poor in order to beg and thieves in order to steal" (Aqhisari, Majalis al-Abrar, fo.74, transl. Goldziher 1971 II:288)

In this chapter I look at the question why people in Iran and Afghanistan visit shrines. In particular I ask whether it is possible to link the mosque with other-worldly and the shrine with this-worldly religious belief and practice. I go on to consider some of the other purposes visiting shrines may serve which do not fit neatly into either of these categories. Finally I ask whether some pilgrimages themselves are more salvation-oriented than others.

a. this and other worldly religion:-

It has been suggested that in most cultures there is a tendency for two religious attitudes to coexist in a sometimes uneasy partnership (see e.g. Mandelbaum 1966, Stirrat 1981). The first is concerned with achieving salvation, and usually involves the idea that there is only one way of attaining this goal. The second is more pragmatic both in that it regards religion as a means of achieving practical results in this world,

and also in that it is often willing to experiment with the gods and rituals of more than one religion in order to do so. Mandelbaum suggests that in many cultures, in Hindu India and especially in Buddhist Sri Lanka, for example, these two aspects of religion, which he calls transcendental and pragmatic, are separated, with different deities, rites and practitioners being assigned to each (1966:1175)¹.

To take another example, Christian (1972:129) notes that the prayers of the villagers of the Nansa valley in northern Spain are of two types. These are, firstly, the instrumental prayers and prayers for the fulfilment of the daily round, both of which call for divine action in this world. These, he says, belong to an old tradition which emphasizes immanence, and are essentially based upon the shrines, local, regional and national. Secondly, there are the prayers for individual forgiveness and salvation, which are moral prayers, usually made through the intermediacy of priests. These are more likely to be generalised devotions, such as Our Lady of the Sorrows, which have no place in the local landscape and to which people relate as individuals and not as members of collectivities.

(footnote¹: Stirrat (1981) discusses a contemporary manifestation in Sri Lanka of what he describes as the tension in Roman Catholicism between saints and priests, with the former acting as mediators in more pragmatically oriented religious behaviour and the latter catering for salvation-oriented religiosity.)

In Iranian Islam, Spooner (1971:175) suggests, the shrine is also the scene and context of everyday personal religion, that is the asking of favours in return for vows. Thus in his view, the prayers and rituals which call for divine action in this world are mostly associated with the shrines. This suggests a parallel between Islam in Iran and Roman Catholicism in Spain in so far as pragmatic or this-worldly religious behaviour can in both countries be linked with shrines and salvation-oriented practice with mosques and churches. It is thus important to ask whether in the Iranian and Afghan contexts the shrine is as Spooner suggests the focus of most this-worldly religious behaviour.

There are several good reasons for believing this to be the case. In the first place, as we saw in chapter one, the shrine is regarded as a place of power continuously emitting baraka, beneficent energy of divine origin. The mosque by contrast is a "non-sacral" place of worship, and is not usually regarded as a source of baraka in the same way. It follows from this that people on the whole visit shrines for reasons different from those for which they visit mosques. Worship in a mosque testifies to one's resolve to honour and obey Allah, but is not designed to open a personal channel of communication with him. It can also have social and political implications which are rather different from those entailed by visiting shrines. Thus, attending the Friday mosque in particular may often be regarded as signifying one's assent to the political status quo since the khutba (sermon) is usually preceded by mention of the ruler's

name. As we saw in chapter four, mosques are nowadays more likely than shrines to be associated with a particular local community, or at least the male members of it, since it still appears to be the case that it is predominantly men who worship publicly in mosques.

In the second place, not only are shrines visited with the intention of establishing direct and personal communication with the saints in question, but sickness and physical handicap appear to be the problems which people most frequently bring to them. In any given area, some shrines are likely to specialise in curing particular illnesses or particular handicaps. Thus, in the Kabul region, the blind and lame visit the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi, the insane are taken to the shrine of Jan Baz and children with whooping cough may be brought to the shrine of Sayyid Mehdi Atesh Nafaz (Einzmann 1977: 93, 133, 201 see also Wolfe 1965:92). Other shrines specialise in dealing with rabies, headaches, rheumatic pains, arthritis, sore throat, toothache, skin complaints, jaundice, childlessness and so on (Einzmann 1977 *passim*). A number of shrines outside the city itself specialise in veterinary medicine, such as the shrine of Pir Siddiq Baba which is said to be particularly efficacious in the case of foot and mouth disease (Einzmann 1977:207).

At European shrines in Late Antiquity cure tended to be "associated with the mobilising of precise associations connected with a holy object" (P. Brown 1982:228). In the sixth century Gregory of Tours, for example, was cured of a splitting headache at Brioude

after dousing his head in the fountain of St. Julian - that is, in the water where the martyr's own head had been washed clean "after the ultimate headache of decapitation" (ibid). Similarly, where an Iranian or Afghan shrine has developed a specialisation, it is often the case that those who use it associate the type of problem involved with some aspect of the life or personality of the saint concerned.

In the Iranian city of Shiraz for example, the existence of a specialisation apparently based on an association of this kind appears to be fairly common. We saw in the last chapter that the saint known as Sayyid Ala ul-din Husain is believed to have been murdered as a child, and that this appears to be the main reason why his shrine is regarded as the most efficacious in helping sick or injured children. Another example is provided by two shrines said to be the graves of unmarried women. They sympathise with women who are not yet married and a visit to one or both of them will soon result in a proposal of marriage (Betteridge 1981:6). In Kabul associations of this kind are apparent in a number of cases. The shrine of Bibi Mahru, who died of grief on hearing of her fiancé's supposed death, for example, is supposed to be particularly responsive to women's cares and problems (Einzmann 1977:135, see also Wolfe 1965: 120). In the case of the saint known as Jan Baz, meaning 'daredevil', it appears that his behaviour was wild and unpredictable, and therefore that he looks sympathetically upon the insane and possessed who are regularly brought to his shrine in the Shahada-i-Salihen area of

Kabul (Einzmann 1977:202). In other instances, however, there is no obvious association of this kind, and the reason for a particular shrine developing a particular specialisation remains obscure.

Apart from sickness and physical handicap people visit shrines for help with almost every aspect of their lives. Women in particular are likely to visit shrines if they are crossed in love or need help with domestic problems. Men are more likely to go to shrines to pray for a good harvest or a successful business venture though they also go to them before their weddings to ensure potency (Einzmann 1977:93-7). A third reason for associating shrines with this-worldly religion is that, as we saw in chapter four, Muslims in Iran and Afghanistan are prepared to visit shrines which either belong to or are also visited by Christians, Hindus and Zoroastrians, a tendency which is even more marked among Indian and Palestinian Muslims (see e.g. Canaan 1927:120, Mandelbaum 1966:1178).

In spite of all this, however, there are good reasons for suggesting that things are not quite as clear-cut as they appear at first sight, and that shrines in Iran and Afghanistan are not simply the locus of this-worldly religion. This is particularly true where the more important Shi'ite shrines are concerned, such as Mashad and Qom, and the supposed tomb of Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan which is visited by Afghan Shi'ites as well as Sunnis. Pilgrimage to shrines associated with the Imams in order to win their

help in attaining paradise has always been recommended by Shi'ite theologians. However, as we saw in chapter three, during the Safavid period an even greater emphasis was placed on the importance of the Imams and imāmzādas as other-worldly saviours without whose intercession no-one could hope to reach heaven. Many Shi'ites therefore visit shrines in order to improve their chances of doing so. They may also visit shrines with the aim of assisting the salvation of others since the merit acquired by pilgrimage can be transferred to them (Thaiss 1973:136).

Where pilgrimage to the smaller Shi'ite shrines and the exclusively Sunni ones is concerned, the desire for salvation is likely to be less important but by no means absent. Some Sunni shrines, as I explained in chapter three, are or were associated with khānaqāhs where Sufi instruction takes place. At these khānaqāhs there are a number of Sufis in residence whose goal is a spiritual one. Sufis make pilgrimages to the tombs of famous pīrs too, but the object of such visits is to obtain union or spiritual communion (muraqaba) with the saint rather than to request his intercession with some practical problem (Trimingham 1971:26, 212). The baraka of a shrine can help one to obtain salvation as well as altering things for the better in this world, and ordinary pilgrims visit shrines with this in mind (Einzmann 1977:93). This is especially true of women who, as noted in chapter four, are often not allowed to pray in mosques and are unable to participate fully in the central Islamic rituals. They are just as anxious

as men to please Allah and gain admission to paradise, and see worship of his saints as a means of doing so.²

In this connection it scarcely needs to be pointed out that the custom of burying the dead at shrines, most pronounced among Shi'ites but common among Sunnis as well, obviously derives from other-worldly motives. It should also be noted that in Afghan villages, though apparently not in Iranian ones, the mulla who leads the prayers in the mosque may also write spells and charms which usually consist of words or phrases from the Koran (Wilber 1956:435, Spooner 1971: 178, Poulton 1973 III:150-1). At the popular level therefore the chief representative of other-worldly religion is also involved in this-worldly religious activities. In conclusion, it may be worth suggesting that it is a mistake to try and distinguish too sharply between this-worldly and other-worldly religious belief and practice. Many people visit shrines for a complex mixture of motives which cannot always be neatly slotted into one or other category. Those who visit shrines in Shiraz, for example, are likely to do so in the hope of obtaining some material benefit. But they also say that a visit to a shrine is "comforting" (taskīn) and "heart-opening" (dilbāz) in and of itself (Betteridge 1981:3).

(footnote²: In the Nansa valley in northern Spain by contrast the women are more likely to visit shrines as well as being more regular than men in their church attendance (Christian 1972:123).)

For these reasons it is fair to say that there is no simple correlation between shrines and this-worldly Islam in Iran and Afghanistan. Although there is a tendency for shrines to be the locus of this-worldly religion, the links between shrine visiting and salvation-oriented religiosity should not be neglected. There is no clear separation of the deities, rites and practitioners associated with each aspect of religion of the kind which, as we saw above, has been reported in Hindu India and Buddhist and Hindu Sri Lanka.³ In Iran and Afghanistan, the position seems comparable to that in northern Spain where shrines attract other-worldly as well as this-worldly religious practice. Christian (1972:114-5) thus points out that some pilgrimages in the Nansa valley are known as pilgrimages "por devocion" and are expressions of praise and professions of love, and are distinguished from those undertaken "por promesa" (for a vow) and "por diversion". For women in particular, he says, the shrine is a place to go in times of crisis, to seek help or give thanks, but it is also a place for regular spiritual refreshment (1972:156).

(footnote³: Pfaffenberger (1979:260) however points out that at least among Hindus in Sri Lanka this-worldly and other-worldly aspects are not always clearly distinguished. In particular, he suggests, the Jaffna pilgrimage is performed for both this-worldly and other-worldly reasons.)

b. other reasons for visiting shrines:-

As in the Christian world, people also go on pilgrimage for a variety of reasons quite apart from or in addition to the hope of gaining a saint's intercession whether in this world or the next. One motive for pilgrimage to the most popular shrine in Iran has traditionally been the status which accrued to someone who visited it. Just as someone who has been on pilgrimage to Mecca may be called hājī, so pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Reza at Mashad means that a person can call himself mashadī (see p.76) (Alberts 1963:842, N. Tapper 1968:73). According to Thaïss (1973:178), the relative ease with which this pilgrimage can be made nowadays and the consequent increase in the numbers of those performing it have led to a decline in its prestige. City dwellers and even the younger villagers no longer use the title mashadī (Alberts 1963:844). Among the Shahsevan tribes of northwestern Iran, however, the fact of having been to Mashad on pilgrimage can still be important for a woman. Not only can it help her to become an aq birçek, or leader in the women's sub-society, but it also means that her opinion is sought by both men and women in matters of family law and custom in which her advice is given equal weight with that of men (N. Tapper 1968:74-8). Similarly Bakhtiari women who have been on pilgrimage to Mashad are treated with great respect (Brooks, personal communication).

Many people probably still go on pilgrimage for a holiday, a break from routine and perhaps the chance of

a casual sexual encounter (compare the motives of medieval English pilgrims (Finucane 1977:40)). I pointed out in chapter three that the institution of mut'a, 'temporary marriage', permitted by Shi'ites but not Sunnis, apparently continues to flourish at the shrines at Mashad and Qom (Donaldson 1933:186, Bazin 1973:100). A visit to a shrine may also be combined with trading activities, hence the common Persian phrase 'ham ziyārat ham tijārat', "business as well as pilgrimage" (Ferrier 1857:58, Goldziher 1971 II:290). When Shahsevan tribesmen sell their sheep in Tehran they may use some of the proceeds to finance a trip to Mashad (Richard Tapper, personal communication). Though the practice is probably less common than it was, pilgrims to Husain's tomb at Kerbela in Iraq, many of whom are or were Iranian, bring hashish, spices, copper and rugs to trade (Fernea 1969: 218). I should point out here that I do not have sufficient data to discuss the question of links between shrines and pilgrimages and bazaars, markets and fairs in Iran and Afghanistan. The popularity of the famous shrines such as those at Mashad, Qom and Mazar-i-Sharif has undoubtedly stimulated the growth of hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops in these cities (see e.g. Bazin 1973:94-100). There is also plenty of evidence to show that temporary bazaars are set up at many other shrines at the times of the year when they customarily receive their largest influx of visitors (see e.g. Alberts 1963:885, Boloukbashi 1971:134, Einzmann 1977:88, Bazin 1980 II:201). However the kind of links between shrines and markets which have been reported in such parts of the Islamic world as Morocco where rural traders

held their great autumn fairs in the vicinity of a sanctuary have not been apparent in Iran and Afghanistan (Thaiss 1973:103).

Visiting shrines had its political and economic aspects too. In the first place, the big shrines were places of sanctuary (bast). Not only were common criminals able to take refuge in them, sometimes for long periods, but a group of people might seek sanctuary in a shrine as a way of indicating to the government that it had failed in its duty and recalling it to its proper functions (Masse' 1938:405-7, Avery 1965:126, Wolfe 1966: 48, Morton 1975:58, Fischer 1980:108). Shrines are rarely used in this way today if at all, but in the early years of the century taking sanctuary in one could still be an effective way of making a political protest (Einzmann 1977:86). In December 1905, for example, some two thousand merchants and notables from Tehran took refuge in the shrine of Abdul Azim in Rayy in protest against the economic and political policies of the government of Shah Muzaffar ud-din (Avery 1965: 123-4). This was the immediate cause of the so-called 'Constitutional Revolution' which led to a prolonged period of political instability in Iran.

Such tactics were of course not always successful. In 1900 merchants and shopkeepers in the city of Herat took refuge in the sanctuary at Gazargah to protest against the harsh taxation imposed by the Afghan Amir Abd al-Rahman but to no effect (Kakar 1979:88). By the 1950's however the landowners of Kandahar were still

paying no taxes. Each year the governor would notify them of the amount outstanding and each year they would seek sanctuary in the Da Kherqa Sharif Ziyarat (the shrine of the Prophet's mantle) for a few hours or days until the governor abandoned his attempt to collect the taxes. In 1959 after the assembled landowners were given the usual instructions by the governor to pay up, they found their way to the shrine blocked by armed police and a full-scale riot erupted. Though bast does not appear to have been taken in the shrine since, the Kandahari landowners are still said to pay few taxes (L. Dupree 1973:56-8).

Finally, one important reason why many people visit shrines is simply that they offer the chance of spending a few hours in pleasant surroundings away from the hustle and bustle of the bazaars. Sometimes they are situated on the outskirts of towns and cities and have gardens with trees and fishponds. We saw in chapter three that the shrines of the Shahada-i-Salihen area in the hills behind Kabul, for example, make pleasant spots for picnics on warm spring days (Wolfe 1965:92) combined with a visit to one of them (Einzmann 1977:84). The atmosphere on such occasions is usually a cheerful one. The "gay and carefree feeling of a festive picnic" prevails when the Basseri tribe visit the shrine of Sayyid Muhammad in their summer pasture area in southwestern Iran (Barth 1964:138). At all times of the years, however, a visit to a shrine gives the women of Kabul a legitimate reason for leaving their homes for an hour or two (Einzmann 1977:21).

c. 'Merit' and 'Specific' patterns of pilgrimages:-

It still remains in the context of motives for pilgrimage to ask whether it is possible to identify different types of Islamic pilgrimage in Iran and Afghanistan corresponding to the 'merit' and 'specific' patterns of pilgrimage Bhardwaj identified among Hindus in India (1972:169-172). The 'merit' pattern consists of pilgrimages to high-level sacred places of ancient origin eulogised in the Puranic Sanskrit literature. The purpose of a pilgrimage of this kind is least likely to be some material benefit. The second, the 'specific pattern', is pilgrimage to a subregional or local shrine which is eulogised only in sectarian literature and is usually aimed at obtaining the deity's help with a specific problem.

The answer is that such a clear distinction between salvation-oriented long-distance pilgrimage and this-worldly pilgrimage is not apparent in Iran or Afghanistan. Pilgrimages may be performed to every level of shrine for this-worldly as well as other-worldly motives. This appears to be true even of Mecca. The multazam, the space between the eastern corner and the door of the Ka'ba, for example, is impregnated with baraka and so pilgrims make a special effort to touch this. Likewise the water of the well of Zamzam nearby is believed to be of infallible curative value and pilgrims usually take some away with them to use in case of illness or for absolution after death (Von Grunebaum 1951:23-4). We saw in chapter five that the

national shrine of Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan is particularly associated with cures of lameness and blindness. Similarly the Imam Reza's tomb at Mashad is visited in order to gain his assistance both with practical problems and in attaining paradise (see e.g. B.A. Donaldson 1938:66-7). In this respect, the pattern of pilgrim circulation in Iran and Afghanistan is more like that in the Christian world. Christian pilgrims "frequent high-level ... shrines quite as much for 'favours' (including miraculous cures) as for devotional reasons corresponding to Bhardwaj's 'merit pattern'. In contrast, the deepest personal piety may be expressed in private devotions at a domestic shrine dedicated to one of the aspects of Jesus or Mary" (V. & E. Turner 1978:239).

Summary:-

I began by noting that it has been suggested that in some cultures different deities, rites and practitioners cater for the salvation-oriented and this-worldly aspects of religious belief and practice. In view of Spooner's suggestion that the shrine in Iran is the scene and context of everyday personal religion, asking favours in return for vows, I asked whether it was possible to link shrines and saints in Iran and Afghanistan with this-worldly and mosques with salvation-oriented religion. The answer was that there is a tendency for people to visit shrines for this-worldly reasons. Sickness and physical handicap are the most

common motives for a visit to a shrine, and certain shrines specialise in particular problems. In some cases, we saw, the speciality derives from some particular circumstance of the saint's life or death which the pilgrim can associate with his or her own problem.

However, we also saw that pilgrimage to the tombs of the Imams and imāmzādas plays an important part in the attainment of salvation for Shi'ites. I suggested that in Sunni Islam too Sufis in particular may visit shrines to perform spiritual exercises. In addition, women, who are often not allowed to pray in the mosque and are debarred from full participation in the central Islamic rituals, tend to regard the worship of the saints at their shrines as an alternative means of pleasing Allah and gaining admission to paradise. For these reasons, it is not possible to link shrines in Iran and Afghanistan with this-worldly aspects of religion to the exclusion of salvation-oriented ones.

Some of the other reasons for visiting shrines were discussed. These include a wish to benefit from the status that accrued to someone who visited Mashad in particular, as well as the simple wish for a break from routine. Political circumstances also led people to visit shrines, and to take sanctuary in them as a way of protesting against the government. Finally, I asked whether it was possible to identify different types of Islamic pilgrimage in Iran and Afghanistan corresponding to the 'merit' and 'specific' patterns Bhardwaj detected in Hindu pilgrimage in India. Such patterns could not be

found; as in the Christian world shrines of every level may be visited for this-worldly and other-worldly reasons.

Chapter Seven Shrines, Sufis and Ulama - Styles
of Islam in Iran and Afghanistan

"Would that we had not lived to see
every demented madman held up by
his fellows as a Pole!"
Their ulama take refuge in him,
indeed, they have even adopted
him as a Lord, instead of the Lord
of the Throne.
For they have forgotten God, saying
"So-and-so provides deliverance
from suffering for all mankind".
When he dies, they make him the object
of pilgrimage, and hasten to his
shrine, Arabs and foreigners alike;
some kiss his grave, and some the
threshold of his door, and the dust ..."

(al-Badr al-Hijazi, satire on the decline
of Sufism, Arberry 1950-128)

The discussion so far has shown that various beliefs and practices are found in connection with Islamic shrines in Iran and Afghanistan which are not usually associated with mosques, and are not numbered among the five so-called 'pillars', the core of Islamic ritual. In this chapter therefore, by way of conclusion, I take up the wider question how the diversity of Islamic belief and practice, for which these shrine and pilgrimage cults provide such striking evidence, may best be accommodated in some kind of analytical framework. I examine the approaches of Spooner, Gulick, Gellner and Eickelmann in particular before suggesting an alternative strategy.

a. religion of the mosque and religion of the shrine:-

Spooner (1971:175) argues that "in terms of the evolution of Iranian Islamic culture, the shrine is closely linked with the development of Sufism. For analytical purposes, the religion of the shrine may be distinguished from the religion of the mosque in the same way as Sufism may be distinguished from Shi'ism". Shi'ism, he says, is associated with the prose of the Koran, while Sufism is "closely interrelated" with poetry (ibid). In this section, I ask whether this dichotomy between a religion of the mosque and a religion of the shrine helps us to understand Iranian and, for the sake of comparison, Afghan Islam.

Before looking at the question in detail, there are two more general points to be made. The first is that Spooner appears to be mistaken when he implies that the Sufis never took any interest in the study of the Koran. In fact the Sufis played a decisive role in the development of the Koranic sciences, and the only difference between them and the 'ulamā in this respect has been in their approaches to the subject. Though the Sufis never denied the value of the exterior meaning of the Koran, they tended to be more interested in its symbolic and allegorical exegesis. Some are said to have found as many as seven thousand meanings in a single verse (Schimmel 1975:25)!

The second general problem is that many of the important aspects of popular Shi'ism in Iran are not

associated with shrines but are nevertheless condemned by the 'ulamā. These include, for instance, the ta'ziya, the passion play, and many of the other practices associated with the first ten days of Muharram such as the processions re-enacting the burial of Husain and the sina zanī and zanjīr zanī (chest beating with fists and beating with chains - usually the back) (Ayoub 1978:154-5). Turning to the question of the relationship between shrines and Sufism, it is true that as Spooner says they have at various points been closely associated in both Iran and Afghanistan. We saw in the first chapter, when we briefly discussed the origins of the shrine cult in Islam, that as Sufism began in the eleventh century to become a mass movement, people began to attribute baraka, miraculous power of divine origin, to its leaders. These Sufi pīrs, especially when dead, became the objects of a popular cult which should be distinguished from the mystical cult proper (Hodgson 1974 II: 217). The pīrs' baraka, it was believed, was retained by their tombs, and hence people began to visit them in order to invoke their help. It was this development, we saw, which made it possible for Islamic shrines to be produced everywhere and for every purpose, to some extent in the Shi'ite world as well as among Sunnis.

It is thus not surprising that, as we saw in chapter two, the shrines most commonly encountered in Afghanistan are the supposed tombs of Sufi pīrs. Similarly in Iran where the supposed tomb of an imāmzāda is the most widespread type of shrine, many shrines are said to be the graves of Sufis. We also saw in the same

chapter that the tombs of several famous poets whose verses expressed Sufi ideas are important shrines, such as those of Ansari and Jami in Herat and Sana'i in Ghazni. There is thus some basis for Spooner's association of shrines with Sufism and poetry.

Another reason for linking Sufism with shrines is that in Iran and Afghanistan Sufi instruction is or was carried on at places associated with them. These are the khānaqāhs which, as we saw in chapter three, are institutions having some resemblance to monasteries or convents, which provide board and lodging for a Sufi pīr or pīrs and a circle of murīdīn (disciples), as well as hospitality for travellers (Trimingham 1971:171-172). Their focal point, and the reason for their existence, is a tomb, usually that of a Sufi pīr, and it is usually the object of visits by ordinary pilgrims as well as wandering Sufis. In this context it should be noted that Sufis still visit, and gather at, many shrines which are not associated with khānaqāhs, and many perform the zikr there too (Einzmann 1977:85, 200).

It is also true that at some points and in some places both the Sunni and the Shi'ite 'ulamā have been hostile to Sufism (see e.g. Keddie 1972:4) and to the cult of saints and shrines. However, Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) is one of the few Sunni 'ulamā to have taken a strong stand against the cult of saints and their tombs (E. of Islam 1927 II:422). Nevertheless, even he never condemned Sufism as such but only what he considered to be inadmissible deviations in doctrine, ritual or morals (E. of Islam 1971 III:953). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who drew his

inspiration from the Hanbalite legal tradition to which Ibn Taymiyya had belonged, condemned as polytheism (shirk) the worship of "king or prophet, or saint or tree or tomb" (Hourani 1967:37). The Wahhabi movement of which he was the founder regarded saints, shrines and even Sufism as innovations which debased the true Islam of the Prophet and the first four caliphs. After the First World War when they took control of Mecca and Medina, the Wahhabis not only expelled the Sufi orders from Mecca, formerly one of their principal centres, but are said to have destroyed a number of tombs in the Baki cemetery in Medina, including those of the Prophet's son Ibrahim, his daughters, his uncle Abbas, the caliph Uthman and the Shi'ite Imams Zain al-Abdin, Muhammad Baqir and Jafar as-Sadiq (D.M. Donaldson 1933:145-6). Many of the fundamentalist Muslims who are attracting so much attention today are heavily influenced by Wahhabi ideas and are similarly hostile to Sufism and the cult of shrines and saints (Gellner 1981:51-2)¹.

(footnote¹: By contrast, in the Soviet Union Muslim shrines are said "to attract people to an extent not reported before the revolution" (Bacon 1980:142). The shrines appear to have taken over many of the functions formerly exercised by the mosques. Public ceremonies are celebrated at them and they are visited even by party members and university lecturers (op. cit. :180). The renewed popularity of the shrines and their guardians, the shaykhs or īshāns, who are usually associated with a Sufi brotherhood, presumably derives from the fact that the government has been largely able to co-opt the 'ulamā and exercise stricter control over the urban mosques than the shrines some of which are situated on the outskirts of towns or in the countryside. Another source speaks of a "parallel Islam" amongst Soviet Muslims which controls more than a thousand places of pilgrimage (Bennigsen 1981:100).)

As far as concerns the attitude of the Shi'ite 'ulamā, since the sixteenth century they have been hostile towards Sufism, though their attitude towards shrines has been quite different from that of the Wahhabis. Until the sixteenth century, respectable theologians had no qualms about writing upon Sufi and gnostic subjects, but under the Safavid Shahs there was an anti-Sufi campaign. As this did not extend to attacks upon the shrines (we saw in chapter three for instance that Shah Abbas walked from his capital at Isfahan to the shrine of the Imam Reza at Mashad), one cannot but be sceptical of the correctness of Spooner's assertion that Sufism and shrines in Iran have always been and still are closely associated. It is revealing that among the works of the seventeenth century religious scholar Majlisi were not only his Gift for Pilgrims, in which as we saw above he explained at great length the finer points of pilgrimage to the tombs of traditionists and poets as well as those of the Imams and imāmzādas, but also a treatise attacking Sufism (D.M. Donaldson 1933:268-9, Trimingham 1971:243, Fischer 1980:144, Yann 1980:94).

It is also possible in Sunni Islam to distinguish to some extent at least between Sufism and the shrine cult. We noted above that the popular cult of the tombs of the Sufi pīrs which sprang up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries should be distinguished from the mystical Sufi cults. In Trimingham's words there is an "essential distinction" between the way in which a genuine Sufi and an ordinary pilgrim approach the shrine of a famous pīr. The Sufi performs the ziyārat in order

to obtain muraqaba, spiritual communion, with the saint, finding in the material symbol of the tomb an aid to meditation. By contrast, as we saw in chapter one, the goal of the ordinary pilgrim is to obtain the baraka and intercession of the saint (Trimingham 1971:26, Schimmel 1975:175).

The fact that it is possible in both the Shi'ite and Sunni traditions to draw some sort of distinction between Sufism and the popular shrine cult is one reason why Spooner's opposition between, on the one hand, the formal religion of the mosque, the 'ulamā and the prose of the Koran, and on the other the shrine, the Sufis and Sufi-influenced poetry, is not particularly helpful or accurate. There are several others. In the first place, as we saw in chapter two, the tombs of 'ulamā did sometimes become shrines, though admittedly not very often. In Iran at least the 'ulamā as well as the Sufi pīrs are sometimes believed to have baraka (Thaiss 1973: 108-13). Secondly, instruction in the Koran, Traditions and Sharia takes or used to take place at those shrines which are associated with khānaqāhs and Sufi teaching (Trimingham 1971:248). In Afghanistan and Iran one of the functions of a khānaqāh is running a madrassa or religious school in which the Koran and the Traditions are studied (Utas 1980:61). We saw in chapter three that Safi al-din's shrine at Ardebil, for instance, had a dār al-hadīs where instruction was given in the field of learning concerned with the sayings and actions of the Prophet (Morton 1975:39). In the few khānaqāhs which still function in Afghanistan, Utas (1980:61) reports,

the pīr generally leaves the madrassa to the care of a mawlawī or Koran teacher (1980:61). In the village of Duru in Iranian Kurdistan, for example, an influential Naqshbandi pīr, Shaykh Osman, has his headquarters. He has many mullas around him and the village is a centre of orthodox learning as well as of mystical practice. Several Qadiri shaykhs in the region also double as 'ulamā (Van Bruinessen 1978:313). In Afghanistan Sufi pīrs often acquired a reputation for their Islamic learning. Combining the miraculous power (karāmat) of a pīr and the religious knowledge of a mulla gave them enormous prestige (Canfield forthcoming:7). It is also worth noting in this context that, as we saw in chapter three, the shrines at Qom and Mashad have for some time been more or less closely associated with the principal centres of religious education in Iran, and form part of the same complexes of buildings.

Thirdly, the fact that among the amenities boasted by many shrines is a mosque or prayer room where the daily prayers may be performed (see chapter three) shows that visiting shrines is not regarded as something set apart from the performance of the central Islamic rituals. In this connection, it should be pointed out that many shrines possess copies of the Koran. Sometimes these are of some antiquity and of considerable artistic merit such as the one until recently kept at the shrine of Nasir-i-Khusrau at Yamgan in Badakhshan (L. Dupree 1976:21). Shrines also serve as repositories for copies of the Koran which are simply falling to pieces. Because of the holiness of their contents, tattered Korans which

are no longer readable cannot simply be thrown away or destroyed. They must be left in holy places such as ziyārats or mosques (Einzmann 1977:68).

It is also important to note that, embroidered on flags, painted on walls, or glazed in the tilework at the more lavishly decorated shrines, verses or phrases from the Koran, such as the fātiha, form part of the decoration of many shrines (Einzmann 1977:40). Lastly in this connection, it should be pointed out that professional Koran reciters (huffāz) are or were to be found at some of the bigger shrines such as Mashad and Ardebil (D.M. Donaldson 1933:195-6, Morton 1974:51). At many other shrines Koran recitations still take place at certain times of the year such as Naw Ruz and during Ramadan and more often in some cases. In Kabul for instance they are given at the shrine of the Prophet's supposed companion Tamim every Thursday evening and throughout Ramadan, and at the Ziyarat-i-Sakhi during the Naw Ruz festival (Einzmann 1977:126, 195).

Finally, we noted above that since the Safavid era the Iranian 'ulamā have been hostile to Sufism and have not belonged to Sufi brotherhoods. In the Sunni world the situation has been more complicated. Though, as we saw earlier, there has been something of a tradition of opposition to shrines and saints, and to some extent to Sufism as well, in the Hanbalite legal school, the majority of 'ulamā have until recently accepted the synthesis of the legalistic and mystical approaches which al-Ghazzali (1059-1111) propounded in his Revival of the

Religious Sciences (Guillaume 1956:148). In this al-Ghazzali explained that the Sufis dealt with the inward side of the same faith and truth of which the 'ulamā were concerned with the outward side. Both he said were equally valid and necessary. In all respects the inward paralleled the outward, complementing and not contradicting it (Hodgson 1974 II:219).

Though detailed studies are lacking, it appears that in Afghanistan, as in many other parts of the Sunni world such as Morocco, Egypt and Ottoman Turkey, distinguished 'ulamā were also often members of the Sufi orders and took part in their rituals (see e.g. Gibb and Bowen 1957 I part 2:201, Gilsenan 1973:163, Hodgson 1974 II: 203, Burke 1979:93, Kakar 1979:126-7). I say more about this below. For the moment suffice it to say that the shrines in the Kabul area today are visited not only by Sufis who gather at them to perform the zīkr, but also by the teachers and students of the madrassas; mullas even visit the shrine of Baba-i-Kaidani (see p.57) to seek blessing for their office. It is also worth noting that at the janda bālā kardan festival at the shrine of Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif on New Year's Day, senior 'ulamā play a prominent part in the proceedings (Canfield, personal communication).

b. Great and Little Traditions:-

For these reasons Spooner's model of religions of the mosque and shrine is not very helpful when it

comes to trying to understand Islam in Iran and Afghanistan. In Spooner's (1971:167) view the religions of the mosque and shrine may be regarded as the religious aspects of the Iranian Great and Little Traditions. Others too have tried to approach the problem of characterising the diversity of Islamic belief and practice in these terms. The Islamist Von Grunebaum (1955:28) for instance, discussing the question of the relationship between what he calls Islamic and local culture patterns, says that these can be experienced and described in different ways, one of which is that of Great and Little Tradition (see also Antoun 1976:163). This may be a useful way of trying to understand how the diversity of Islamic belief and practice has developed, but it is doubtful that it is a very helpful way of approaching contemporary Islam. On the other hand, Gulick's adaptation of Redfield's model of Great and Little Traditions to the Islamic context is positively misleading. "The Quran is the scriptural base for All Muslims", he says, "and the Hadith is accepted by most of them as the sacred supplement to the Quran. These are the foundations of the RELIGIOUS great tradition of Islam, and their recognised custodians and interpreters - the ulama - are the SECTARIAN personnel of that tradition" (1976:172). The Five Pillars, he continues, are the main religious features of the Great Tradition, while those of the Little Tradition are "reverence for saints, dhikr, zar and evil eye, and prophylaxis" with the jinn and life-crisis rituals such as circumcision

possessing features of each (ibid).²

This approach to the problem has two major flaws. In the first place it ignores the fact that, as we have seen in earlier chapters, visiting the shrines of saints, in particular the tombs of the Imams and their close relatives, has always been part of the Great Tradition of Twelver Shi'ism. In the second, it assigns Sufism to the Little Tradition. According to Redfield (1971:42), "the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities ... (it) is for the most part taken for granted and not submitted to much scrutiny or considered refinement and improvement". This is scarcely an accurate picture of the way in which Sufism developed. Originally the preserve of a tiny minority, generally from the wealthier and better-educated strata of society, Sufism did eventually become a mass movement, or series of them, but it has always had its share of educated and scholarly proponents (see e.g. Schimmel 1975:23-97). We noted above that Sufis specialised in esoteric interpretations of the Koran. There is in fact a vast Sufi literature including a number of schools of mystical poetry and allegory, as well as highly technical and specialised works of theory (Schimmel 1975:18). Reverence for saints, visiting their tombs and the zikr

(footnote²: The zar is a possession cult which appears to have originated in Ethiopia (I. Lewis 1971:79) and to have spread within the last century as far as southern Iran (Modaressi 1968).)

have all been part of an explicit and self-conscious tradition (Trimingham 1971:179).

Moreover, at times representatives of Sufism have been more important than the 'ulamā. Although as I already suggested it is often difficult to distinguish 'ulamā and Sufis, there is no doubt that the latter formed their own Great Tradition. They played a decisive role in the conversion of the inhabitants of what is now Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and subsequently the Mongols, to Islam (Trimingham 1971:91, Bosworth 1974:127). Large parts of India, Indonesia and sub-Saharan Africa were converted to Islam by Sufi preachers (Schimmel 1975:240). In India in particular Sufis appear to have dominated Islamic life for many centuries (see e.g. Trimingham 1971:22).

A third reason why, in the Shi'ite case in particular, Gulick's use of the model of Great and Little Traditions does not seem useful is that other aspects of popular religion besides the zīkr do not, as far as one can tell, have their origins in the Little Tradition of the ordinary people. The ta'ziya, the passion play, for example, based upon the defeat of Husain at Kerbala and performed in Muharram, is reported to have been introduced into Iran by the Safavid Shahs and greatly favoured by their successors the Qajars (Fischer 1980:31,176, Enayat 1982:181). Many of the other practices associated with public mourning during the first ten days of Muharram have not emerged from popular religion but were

instituted by the ruler of Mesopotamia, Ahmad ibn Buwaihid in the tenth century (D.M. Donaldson 1933: 277)³.

If we want to use the model of the Great and Little Tradition in the Islamic context then it will have to have three dimensions instead of two. It may be reasonable to talk in terms of a single Little Tradition in any one area, but we shall have to allow that the Great Tradition has two aspects, that of the 'ulamā and that of the Sufis. We shall also have to admit that the Little Tradition has elements of both. It does not consist merely of parochialised elements of Sufism, as Gulick and Spooner would have us believe, but of parochialised elements of the 'ulamā's version of Islam as well. This is to be seen clearly in the magical efficacy attributed to the Koran in so many parts of the Islamic world, for example in the use of amulets which contain sentences from the Koran and in the belief that recitation of the Koran can have beneficial effects in this life as well as in the next (Canfield 1973:128, Gulick 1976:173, MacIntyre 1982:4). Even with these modifications, however, the Great and Little Tradition framework still does not seem very useful in the Islamic

(footnote³: Fischer (1980:176) comments that it would be interesting to trace the ebb and flow in the usage of the Kerbela paradigm in different historical periods so as to estimate the effects of royal and local elite patronage as opposed to the effects of 'ulamā or popular elaboration.)

context, mainly because it cannot take proper account of the complexities of religious developments in any one area of the Muslim world.

c. religion of the book vs. religion of the shrine:-

Gellner's (1963:147) model of two kinds of Islam, a religion of the book and a religion of the shrine, is equally restricted. According to Gellner (1969:130-1), the religion of the book, that of the 'ulamā, is strictly monotheistic; it is puritanical, stresses scriptural revelation and egalitarianism between believers. It is characterised by the absence of any mediators between man and God and therefore lacks any hierarchy, in this or the next world. It is moderate and sober, minimising ritual or mystical extravagance, and stresses the observance of rules rather than emotional states. By contrast, the religion of the shrine, that of the Sufi brotherhoods, accepts mediation, and has a tendency towards hierarchy in this world and the next, which leads to ritual specialisation in the former and a multiplicity of spirits in the latter. It tends to be incarnated in perceptual symbols or images rather than in the abstract recorded word, and is characterised by a profusion of ritual and mystical practices rather than by sobriety and moderation. Its adherents place greater value upon obedience to their ritual specialists than on following the rules laid down in the Koran and Sharia. It is overwhelmingly a rural phenomenon while the religion of the book is predominantly urban (Gellner

1969:130-1). The religion of the shrine is found in the towns in the persons of Sufi mystics but there it is an escape from life whereas in the countryside it confirms local forms of social organisation (op. cit. :138).

Recently, Gellner has suggested that things may be a little less clear cut than he had previously argued. For example, he does draw attention to the fact that there are scholars among Sufis and vice versa (1981:43), and that some Sufi orders, especially some of the newer ones such as the Sanusi and the Tijaniyya, are urban-based, puritanical and scripturalist (1981:50). However, he still draws a contrast between an egalitarian, scripturalist, puritanical, moralist and largely urban central tradition, devoid of hierarchy or formal leadership, and marginal, largely rural and questionably orthodox movements which are fragmented, ritualistic, hierarchical, ecstatic and deeply implicated in, if not compromised by, local political structures (1981:54). He still talks of an opposition between scholar and Sufi, though in Shi'ite Islam, he says, it is one incorporated as an internal distinction within the scholar class itself. Iran, he says, had in the past two kinds of 'ulamā, on the one hand, administrative-bureaucratic ones, and on the other, populist-mystical ones, the former serving religion and state, the latter catering to the religious needs of the masses (1981:43).

However, despite these qualifications, the model still does not seem adequately to reflect the true state of affairs in Morocco, let alone in Iran and

Afghanistan and other parts of the Islamic world. In the first place, it takes no account of the extent to which the representatives of Gellner's central tradition, the 'ulamā, have been deeply implicated in local political structures. This problem is too vast to be considered here in any detail. However it may be worth pointing out that throughout Islamic history "worship at the mosques never ceased to be associated in some degree with political authority; it was a state function. The khāniqāhs were eminently private from the very beginning" (Hodgson 1974 II:213). It is no exaggeration to say that throughout the greater part of the history of Islamic society the 'ulamā have in large measure acquiesced in the status quo and cooperated with the secular authorities, whether it be in the Abbasid empire, Mamluke Egypt and Syria or the Ottoman empire (see e.g. Lapidus 1967:112, B. Lewis 1968:14, Hodgson 1974 I:346). They have been as deeply implicated in local political structures as the Sufis. It may not be entirely irrelevant here to note that in the Soviet Union today it is on the whole the 'ulamā and not the Sufis who have been co-opted by the regime (Bennigsen 1981).

However, my main objection to Gellner's approach is that it draws too sharp a distinction between a "central" and a "marginal" Islam and the characteristics supposedly possessed by each. Ken Brown (1976: 115), for example, has shown that in the Moroccan town of Salé most people saw no contradiction between the orthodoxy of the 'ulamā and the mystical practices of the Sufi orders. Most of the town's zāwiyas (Sufi lodges),

Brown says, played important roles as centres of religious education and prayer. At certain times of the year, especially during the nights of Ramadan, the 'ulamā lectured in the zāwiyas to the respectable bourgeoisie of the city, not simply to those seeking an escape from life because of their social marginality (1976:111). In addition, Brown reports, there is a procession once a year on the Prophet's birthday which also commemorates the city's patron saint, Sidi Abd Allah b. Hassun. In this procession orthodox and popular religion are combined into a kind of local patriotic fête, and it is as if Prophet and saint are both turned into members of the Slawé family (op. cit. :90-1). Similar rituals probably took place in other cities since the tomb of a patron saint was an institution of a distinctly urban character in Morocco (Burke 1979:85). It is therefore clear that in Salé, which was not untypical of Moroccan cities, Sufism and the shrine cult played an important part in enabling the community to express its sense of identity, rather than simply enabling individuals to escape from life. It is also obvious that there are or were strong links between the 'ulamā and the Sufis. In a similar vein, Eickelmann (1981:223) points out that in fact there was traditionally no sharp dichotomy between urban and rural belief and ritual in Morocco but a continuum between them. Many marabouts were respected as religious scholars and their popular reputations as miracle workers and politicians in no way diminished the respect that was accorded their religious learning. Far from being subject to the hostility of the urban 'ulamā, many marabouts were respected by them and shared similar

ideas about Islam. As we saw above, this blurring of the lines of demarcation between 'ulamā and Sufis was not confined to Morocco. By the eighteenth century the whole body of the 'ulamā in the Ottoman empire, for example, came to be included in one or other Sufi brotherhood (Gibb and Bowen 1957 I, part 2:76).

In the Iranian context we have already seen that hierarchical, ecstatic and ritualistic features have been incorporated into Shi'ism, largely because of the belief in the importance of the intercession of the Imams and imāmzādas. Gellner's suggestion that in Iran the opposition between scholar and Sufi has developed into an internal distinction within the 'ulamā between administrative-bureaucratic ones, serving state as well as religion, and populist-mystical ones catering to the religious needs of the masses, is puzzling. In his original scheme, it is the religion of the Sufis which caters to popular religious needs and is deeply compromised with the socio-political structure. Hence, in Iran it should be the religion of the 'ulamā who cater for the religious needs of the masses which is implicated in local political structures. However, in his view it seems to be the other way round. The truth of the matter is that both kinds of 'ulamā in Iran have been implicated in local political structures in different ways. This is just one aspect of the complexity of the Islamic tradition with which Gellner's model with its rigid dichotomies cannot cope. I pointed out earlier that in Afghanistan prominent Sufis often took pains to acquire a reputation for orthodox religious learning, and that

the 'ulamā still have links with shrines and with Sufism. I also drew attention to the fact that the Koran and the Traditions, which according to Gellner are the preserve of the 'ulamā, were traditionally taught at the Sufi khānaqāhs. It is clear that it is not very useful to think in terms of a religion of the book or mosque and a religion of the shrine in either the Afghan or the Iranian contexts because in reality it is impossible to disentangle them.

Another aspect of the problem is the way in which, as we saw in chapter one, from the twelfth century Sufism came to supplement if not supplant the Sharia, the religious law, as a means of creating social unity and order (Hodgson 1974 II:221). The Sharia takes little account of anything besides relations between individuals, recognising no institutions or corporate bodies. The spiritual authority of the Sufi pīrs and the ethic they preached, in Hodgson's words, "related the conscience of ordinary men to the institutions they needed" (ibid.). The Sufi orders and their awliyā "consecrated" secular institutions and came to be closely associated with, for example, craft and commercial guilds (Trimingham 1971: 230). We saw in chapter five that artisan and trade guilds in Afghanistan, for example, still tend to have patron saints to whose tombs their members make pilgrimages.

For all these reasons, Gellner's model of a scriptural, egalitarian, orthodox and predominantly urban religion of the 'ulamā, and a rural, ritualistic,

hierarchical, religion of the Sufis fails to correspond to reality in the greater part of the Islamic world. However, the habit of contrasting polar types of Islam is one that is obviously hard to resist. Although, as we noted above, Eickelmann rightly qualifies Gellner's rigid opposition between urban and rural Islam, he too suggests that throughout the Islamic world "opposing (or complementary) conceptions of Islam" are to be found which are "co-present and in dynamic tension with each other" (1981:203). These he calls "particularistic" and "universalistic". They are, he says, to be distinguished by their lesser or greater degrees of compromise with the social order. Thus the attitudes of reformist Islam and the beliefs of many educated Muslims tend to be universalistic in that they are explicit and more general in their implications. Other conceptions of Islam, such as maraboutism in North Africa, are particularistic in that they are largely implicit and tied to particular social contexts (1981:203).

There are two difficulties with this approach. Firstly, it only deals with one aspect of a much wider problem. Secondly, it suffers from the dichotomising compulsion to which I just drew attention. Nevertheless, provided we accept that the Islam of the ‘ulamā can be just as tied to particular social contexts as can that of marabouts or pīrs, and that the Islam of the marabouts or pīrs is not always simply a pale reflection of local socio-political organisation, then Eickelmann's formulation is useful. It should, however, be clear by now that any simple model of Islam which operates in terms of

two contrasting types, whether we call these 'formal' and 'informal', 'official' and 'popular', Great and Little Tradition, or religions of the book or mosque and shrine is bound to be misleading.

d. styles of Islam:-

Instead of taking it for granted that there can only be two types of Islam, as the authors whose ideas we have been discussing appear to have done, I suggest that it is important to start with the assumption that in any given part of the Islamic world there are likely to be several different styles of belief and practice. The problem is then to discover some satisfactory criteria in terms of which they may be identified and compared. Some of the terms in which Gellner contrasts his religions of the book and of the shrine are undoubtedly useful, provided that we replace each of his dichotomies with a continuum and do not think of the poles of the continua as being arranged in two opposing series. I suggest that initially at least, it makes sense to identify and compare styles of Islam in terms of eight different criteria. These are the extent to which each style is:-

- (1) monotheistic or intercessionary
- (2) moderate and sober or emotional and/or ecstatic
- (3) more or less ritualistic
- (4) rule-following or personality-oriented
- (5) explicit or implicit

- (6) led by men who base their authority primarily on their mastery of the religious sciences or upon their intercessionary abilities
- (7) other-worldly or this-worldly
- (8) independent and potentially critical of existing social and political structures or used to support them (see e.g. Ayoub 1981:271)

To conclude this chapter I show how this framework might be used in Afghan and Iranian contexts. For Iranian Islam I take Fischer's notion of a three-class analysis of religious styles as a starting point. Fischer (1980:136) talks about the religious styles of village and working class urban communities, the traditionally educated urban middle class merchants, landowners and 'ulamā, and the new middle and upper classes with a modern secular education. Disappointingly however he never describes the salient features of these styles in any detail. In view of this, I suggest that it may make better sense to think in terms of four styles of Shi'ite Islam in Iran, firstly, the Islam of the village, secondly of the urban working and middle classes, thirdly of the 'ulamā, and fourthly of those in, as Fischer puts it, "the wealthier, better-educated traditional occupations", the upper-class and the new secularly-educated middle class (1980:140).

My reason for distinguishing the Islam of the villages from that of the urban working and middle classes is that, as both Spooner (1963:83-5) and Eric Hooglund (1982:24) point out, very few villages have a

full-time resident mulla. According to Hooglund, as late as 1978 out of a total of an estimated 70,000 villages in Iran only between 5,000 and 8,000 had such a mulla. The overwhelming majority of villages were rarely if ever visited by clerical representatives of what he calls formal religion. This is in stark contrast with the towns where ordinary people are much more exposed to mullas and to the religion of the 'ulamā in general and means that rural and urban religion do differ in important respects.

I begin by describing religion in Shi'ite villages in Iran in terms of the criteria outlined above. This style relies heavily on the intercession of the Imams, imāmzādas and saints in general. Its emotional even ecstatic nature is particularly evident during Muharram, when there are processions of flagellants, and an effigy of Husain's coffin may be carried through the streets and passion plays performed (see e.g. Spooner 1963:90-2, Alberts 1963:899-901). In view of the existence of these practices as well as the long-established habit of visiting shrines, it is fair to say that village religion is ritually extravagant. It is on the whole rule-following rather than having a cult of personality (see e.g. Spooner 1963:89), and as we saw above it is largely implicit in that the 'ulamā and the mullas have little direct influence in most villages. Nevertheless it recognises the authority of the hierarchy of those trained in the madrassas of Qom and Mashad which culminates in the āyatullāhs. It has strong this-worldly as well as other-worldly aspects which can be

seen in the shrine cult and the popularity of the du'ā nevīs, the amulet maker (Spooner 1971:178). Finally, it has little autonomy in the political sphere and appears to be easily manipulated in support of the status quo (see e.g. M. Hooglund 1982:11-2).

Iranian urban working and middle class Islam differs from that of the villages with regard to its degree of explicitness, its political independence and the strength of its connections with the religious hierarchy of 'ulamā. In the first place, the religion of the town is a much more self-conscious one. This can be seen, for instance, in the popularity of the weekly gatherings organised for the study of the Koran by the local religious associations which are attended by a cross-section of people from a particular neighbourhood (Thaïss 1973:192-3, Fischer 1980:134-5). These are the local groups mentioned in chapter four which also organise pilgrimages to the big Shi'ite shrines. Secondly, it is or was until the fall of the Shah in 1979 a politically much more independent religious style. The rawzas which the bazaaris used to attend until 1979 are a good illustration of this. In these, parallels were drawn between the Umayyad tyranny under which Muslims supposedly suffered in the late seventh century and Husain's refusal to accept it and his consequent defeat and death, and the oppression which the Iranians were said to be suffering under the late Shah, the implication being that they too should resist the establishment of the day (Thaïss 1972:359-65).

Thirdly, the townspeople have much closer links with the 'ulamā than do the villagers. Every Shi'ite should choose and follow a particular authority in religious matters, known as a marja al-taqlīd (literally a 'source of emulation'), but the bazaaris benefit from the 'ulamā's help in solving local conflicts as well, in addition to which each family needs a religious leader to officiate at life crisis rituals. In return for all this the 'ulamā receive alms from the townspeople. However, one's religious guide, or more likely his local representative, can allow a portion of one's alms to be used to help a fellow merchant who is in financial difficulties. To benefit from this sort of help, a bazaar trader obviously needs to keep on good terms with 'ulamā (Thaiss 1972:361).

Turning now to the religion of the 'ulamā, this differs from that of the village and the town in three important respects. Firstly, it is much more sober, since the 'ulamā frown on many of the practices associated with ritual mourning during Muharram such as the chest or back-beating processions (Spooner 1971:172-3, Thaiss 1973:290). Secondly, it is a highly explicit religious style, being examined and taught in its minutest aspects in the madrassas (see e.g. Fischer 1980:12-60). Thirdly, it is politically independent; since the second half of the nineteenth century its representatives have come to play a progressively more important role in Iranian political life, culminating in the present state of affairs in which they dominate it completely. This is a recent phenomenon; earlier 'ulamā would certainly not

have agreed with āyatullāh Khumaini's view, expressed in his Vilayat-i-Faqih ('government of the religious scholar'), that the ʿulamā should actually rule the country (Keddie 1980:532)⁴.

As I suggested above it is also worth trying to identify another Iranian style of Islam, though not much is known about it. This is strongly influenced by Sufism, and is reported to be almost entirely an urban phenomenon and to have a fairly restricted following (Yann 1980:94-5). It appears to differ from the styles we have so far examined in several respects. Firstly, like rural religion but unlike either of the urban varieties, it relies on the intercession of the Sufi saints, the awliyāʿ, as well as the Imams and imāmzādas. However, by contrast with rural religion, this intercession may be performed by living as well as dead pīrs. Secondly, therefore, this style places a great emphasis on personal loyalty towards its pīrs, and accords them considerable authority, probably more than is accorded to the ʿulamā by the other styles. Thirdly, like the religion of the ʿulamā but unlike that of the villages and bazaars, it is strongly salvation-oriented. Finally, like the rural religion, it appears to have been a largely apolitical style which has been manipulated in

(footnote⁴: This discussion of the ʿulamā's style of religion is not meant to imply that they form a coherent political bloc. The recent humbling of āyatullāh Shariatmadari clearly shows that they do not)

support of the political status quo. Like the Qajar rulers in the nineteenth century, the late Shah, Muhammad Reza, and his father Reza Shah, were much more tolerant of the Sufis than they were of the 'ulamā. Sufism was a religious style which could on the one hand be used against the 'ulamā, and on the other could provide an outlet for those who were religiously inclined but did not want to identify themselves with the 'ulamā. Many members of the upper ranks of the Pahlavi administration, as well as army officers and representatives of the new commercial bourgeoisie, are reported to have belonged to one or other branch of the most influential Iranian order, the Ni'matullah (Yann 1980:95-100, Fischer 1980:142)⁵.

In conclusion, it is instructive to compare Islam in predominantly Sunni Afghanistan with the styles we have been examining in Shi'ite Iran. By comparison with Iran we know very little about Islam in Afghanistan, particularly its organisational aspects, which makes it difficult to distinguish different religious styles there. On the whole its uniformity is striking, to some extent even across sectarian boundaries. Thus Sufism and the Sufi pīrs continue to play an important role in popular religious life among both Sunnis and Shi'ites (see e.g. Poulton 1973 III:43, Canfield 1973:4, Tavakolian 1980:13-5), by contrast with Iran where, as

(footnote⁵: Fischer (1980:142) points out that the Ni'matullahi Sufi order appears to have experienced an important revival among the educated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "a political current of unclear significance".)

we saw above, among Shi'ites Sufism appears to be practised largely by the upper class and a section of the middle class. The most widely distributed style of Afghan Islam is therefore, like Iranian Shi'ism, intercessionary, but with the exception of Ali the first Imam, it is the awliyā' rather than the Imams and imāmzādas who are the intercessors. It tends to be more moderate and sober than Iranian Shi'ism, since it lacks the emotional stimuli of the rawzas and the Muharram rituals. Nevertheless, many Afghans attend Sufi zikrs which can take an ecstatic form.

However, in spite of the popularity of these Sufi rituals and the shrine cult, Sunni Islam in Afghanistan is less ritualistic than popular urban and rural Shi'ism in Iran. In view of the often extravagant personality cult which surrounded, and to some extent still surrounds, the well known pīrs, it is fair to say that popular Sunni Islam in Afghanistan is also less concerned with following rules than Iranian Shi'ism.⁶ It is a largely implicit style of religion, though it does seem to be more common for the average village to have a full-time mulla than in Iran. Its authorities

(footnote⁶: These pīrs tend to come from a few famous families, such as the Mujadidis, the Gailanis, Qizil Ayaghs, Kayanis, and Panjaos (Wilber 1956:397, Einzmann 1977:24-31). The continuing popular appeal of these 'saintly' families is shown by the fact that some of them, in particular the Mujadidis and the Gailanis, lead groups of mujāhidīn opposed to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (see e.g. Chaliand 1982:57).)

have, until very recently at least, been the famous Sufi pīrs we have just mentioned, who enjoyed a great deal of influence right up to the national level, probably greater than that traditionally enjoyed by the Iranian ‘ulamā (see e.g. Einzmann op. cit.). By contrast with their Iranian counterparts, Afghan ‘ulamā, unless they had Sufi connections, were rarely of much consequence⁷. It is a style with a pronounced this-worldly emphasis, as we saw when discussing the rituals surrounding visits to shrines. Finally, it is a style which is deeply compromised with local political and social structures. This does not mean that it lacks a political dimension, rather that it has usually been manipulated in support of the status quo. In the 1920's, for instance, when King Amanullah tried to reduce the influence of the religious classes and the tribal leaders as part of his efforts to modernise Afghan society, the defense of Islam was used as a rallying cry with which to arouse opposition to him, and he was eventually forced to abdicate (see e.g. Poullada 1973). Similarly, much of the opposition to the Taraki-Amin and Karmal regimes since 1978 has arisen because any attempt to modify traditional social arrangements tends to be interpreted as an attack on Islam.

(footnote⁷: It is no coincidence that, as Hyman (1982: 17) points out, there are few madrassas of any repute in Afghanistan and that Afghan ‘ulamā tend to go abroad to study, the Sunnis to India or Egypt and the Shi'ites to Iran or Iraq.)

In the absence of detailed studies of Sunni Islam in Afghanistan it is difficult to pick out other styles. One which can be identified is as yet the preserve of a very small minority, and may be described as fundamentalist. It has developed within the last twenty years, especially since 1973 when King Muhammad Zaher was forced to abdicate by his cousin Daoud. Daoud announced his intention of pursuing various socialist policies, though he did very little to put them into practice. It appears to be directly influenced by the ideas of the Pakistani religious commentator, Mawlana Maududi, who died in 1979, and his Jama'at-i-Islami, and indirectly by the Muslim Brotherhood (Enayat 1982:83-93). Like these movements it has little appeal for the traditional religious classes; it finds most of its recruits among the poorly paid teachers and low-ranking bureaucrats, many of whom have a rural background and are recent arrivals in the cities (Chaliand 1982:55).

By comparison with the dominant style of Islam in Afghanistan, it condemns Sufism and the Sufi pīrs, and is therefore less ecstatic and ritualistic, emphasizing the importance of following the rules laid down in the Koran and Sharia. It is a much more explicit style, and its leaders, though they are not on the whole ʿulamā, also base their authority on their claim to understand the real meaning of Islam and not on their intercessionary powers. It is a style which rejects the superstitious this-worldly Islam of the shrines and the village mullas who usually produce a variety of spells and charms as well as leading prayers in the mosque (see e.g. Wilber 1956:433, Poulton 1973 III:150-1). Finally it is an

explicitly political style, calling for an Islamic revolution which, by-passing the traditional religious leaders whom it regards as lax and corrupt, would eliminate western influences as well as Soviet atheism and communism, introduce the provisions of the Sharia and construct a truly Islamic political system. Its principal proponents today are, not surprisingly, leaders of groups of mujāhidīn, in particular Gulbudin Hikmatyar, who leads the Hizb-i-Islami, Yunus Khalis, who leads another breakaway group of the same name, and Burhan ud-din Rabani, whose group is known as the Jama'at-i-Islami (Chaliand 1982:55).

Summary:-

In this chapter I explored the problem of how the diversity of belief and practice displayed by Muslims in Iran and Afghanistan in particular, and in the Islamic world in general, may best be accommodated in some kind of analytical framework. I began by examining the approaches of Spooner, Gulick, Gellner and Eickelmann. Firstly, I discussed Spooner's suggestion that Islam in Iran may be approached in terms of formal and informal religions, that is a religion of the mosque and a religion of the shrine, the former being associated with the prose of the Koran and the 'ulamā, the latter with Sufi-inspired poetry and Sufism. The main problem with this, I pointed out, is that in the Shi'ite tradition it has always been possible clearly to distinguish the cult of shrines from Sufism, and that to some extent this is

true of Sunni Islam as well. For this reason Spooner's association of shrines with Sufism, particularly in the Iranian context, is not very persuasive. I put forward some other reasons for being sceptical about the whole approach to the problem, showing for example that the Koran is associated just as much with the shrine as with the mosque. I also noted that the Sunni 'ulamā' have not always been hostile to Sufism, and that many Afghan, Ottoman and North African 'ulamā' were also Sufis. All in all, I suggested, the picture is a good deal more complex than a simple opposition between religions of mosque and shrine allows us to appreciate.

In the second place, I looked at attempts to apply the model of Great and Little Traditions to Afghan and Iranian Islam, and in particular at Gulick's suggestion that the Koran and the hadīs are the scriptural basis of the Great Tradition and the 'ulamā' its interpreters, while reverence for saints, Sufism and prophylaxis are among the principal features of the Little Tradition. There are two major difficulties with this approach. In the first place, it takes no account of the fact that reverence for saints in the persons of the Imams and their close relatives has always been part of the Great Tradition of Shi'ism. Secondly, it assigns Sufism to the Little Tradition, ignoring the fact that it has always a highly self-conscious movement and has an enormous literature.

Thirdly, I examined Gellner's model of the religion of the book and the religion of the shrine. On the basis of data from Morocco, Gellner suggests that

it is possible to draw a contrast between, on the one hand, an egalitarian, scripturalist, puritanical and largely urban Islam, devoid of hierarchy or formal leadership, and, on the other, marginal, questionably orthodox movements which are fragmented, ritualistic, hierarchical, ecstatic, largely rural and deeply implicated in, if not compromised by, local political structures. I put forward a number of objections to this approach. First, it takes no account of the extent to which throughout Islamic history, the 'ulamā have also been implicated in political and administrative structures. Secondly, it draws an artificial distinction between a central and a marginal Islam and the characteristics supposedly possessed by each. In Morocco in particular there has traditionally been no sharp dichotomy between urban and rural religion, many marabouts for example, having also been respected religious scholars; this blurring of the lines of demarcation between 'ulamā and Sufis has occurred throughout the Sunni world. A third difficulty with Gellner's model is that it ignores the fact that in many places the Sufi orders and their awliyā' 'consecrated' such essentially urban institutions as craft and commercial guilds. For these reasons I suggested that it is not very useful to approach Islam in terms of an opposition between religions of the book and of the shrine.

Finally, I noted the distinction recently drawn by Eickelmann between 'particularistic' and 'universalistic' types of Islam, which are to be distinguished by their degree of explicitness and compromise with a particular social order. While agreeing that styles of

Islam do indeed differ in these ways, I also argued that any model of Islam which operates simply in terms of two contrasting types, whether we call them 'formal' and 'informal', 'official' and 'popular', Great and Little Traditions, or religions of the mosque or book and shrine, is bound to be inadequate.

I suggested that the diversity of belief and practice in the Islamic world means that we need models more flexible and more sophisticated than these simple dichotomies which have so far dominated our understanding of Islam. Starting with the assumption that in any given part of the Islamic world there are likely to be several different styles of Islamic belief and practice, I listed a number of different dimensions in terms of which these styles may, initially at least, be identified, compared and contrasted. I illustrated this by describing four different styles of Shi'ite Islam in Iran, that of the village, that of the urban working and middle classes, that of the 'ulamā, and that of the upper class, the new secularly-educated middle class and those in the wealthier, better-educated traditional occupations. I concluded by comparing these with traditional and fundamentalist styles of Sunni Islam in Afghanistan.

Conclusion:-

I began by pointing out in the introduction that within the last ten or fifteen years social anthropologists and historians have shown a new interest in the phenomenon of pilgrimage. In spite of this, I noted, there has as yet been very little study of pilgrimage and shrine cults in the Islamic world. I explained that the principal aim of the thesis was therefore to begin to remedy this deficiency by looking at the subject in the Iranian and Afghan contexts.

In chapter one in the first place I described the theories of saintly intercession developed by both Sunnis and Shi'ites in the centuries following the death of the Prophet. I showed how these were integrated with pre-Islamic beliefs in holy men and sacred places to produce a large number of shrines which came to attract pilgrims in large numbers. Secondly, I examined Bryan Turner's suggestion that it is misleading to refer to the various kinds of holy men to be found in the Islamic world as saints because they are so different from Christian saints. While I agreed that it may unduly distort the picture to call living Muslim holy men saints, I suggested that it is reasonable and convenient to use the term in the context of a discussion of the shrines which evolved from their tombs or around other places associated with them. This is because the roles they perform when they are dead and the ways in which they are approached are remarkably similar to those associated with Christian saints. Thirdly, I explored

some of the differences between shrines and mosques. I showed that the mosque is a non-sacral place, used largely for communal worship, whereas the shrine is believed to be charged with beneficent power of divine origin (baraka) which can be tapped by individual visitors.

In the second chapter, I looked at the simple classifications of shrines put forward by Spooner and Louis Dupree before drawing attention to the considerable range of objects and places which have come to be regarded as sources of sacred power in Iran and Afghanistan, and the variety of saints associated with them. In order to take proper account of this range and variety, I suggested that it is helpful to classify shrines both in terms of their principal attractions, and the saints with whom they are linked. Firstly, therefore, I distinguished between man-made shrines, consisting of saints' tombs, reliquaries and sometimes their supposed hand and footprints, and natural ones, including rocks, which can also bear supposed saintly footprints, caves, springs and wells, trees and mountain peaks and unusual rock formations. Secondly, I identified nine social and religious roles the performance of which has posthumously conferred a sacred quality upon their incumbents. The most important of these are Biblical-Koranic figures, relatives and descendants of the Prophet, heroes of early Islam and founders of Sufi orders. By means of this dual classification it is possible to identify seventy-two different types of shrine. While admitting that there was little to be

gained by enumerating all these different combinations, I nevertheless argued that a classification of this kind gives a much better idea of the variety displayed by Islamic shrines than the rudimentary classifications into five or six types offered by Spooner and Dupree.

I continued by briefly outlining a second classification of Islamic shrines in terms of the catchment areas from which they draw visitors. I suggested that in the Muslim world it is useful to think in terms of five levels of shrines, pan-Islamic (including pan-Shi'ite and pan-Ismaili), national, regional, district and local. I drew particular attention to the importance of the pan-Shi'ite shrine at Mashad and the national shrines at Mazar-i-Sharif and Qom. I concluded that both in Iran and Afghanistan, pan-Shi'ite, national and regional shrines have a more Islamic character than do the district and local ones.

In chapter three I discussed the question of the control and administration of shrines. I noted that charitable trusts (awqāf) were often set up for shrines, and that as a result some, in particular the shrine of the eighth Imam Ali Reza at Mashad, became and remain substantial landowners. The wealth acquired by some shrines meant that most rulers were interested in exercising some kind of fairly loose supervision over them. However, the Safavid Shahs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lavished a great deal of money and attention upon the shrines of the Imams and imāmzādas for a mixture of political and economic reasons.

Nevertheless, it is clear that since the late nineteenth century the state has asserted its authority over shrines in both Iran and Afghanistan to an extent hitherto unmatched even by the Safavids. I went on to look at the way in which shrines were actually administered, pointing out that to this day some shrines, especially Mashad, Qom and Mazar-i-Sharif, have large and specialised staffs. I noted that positions at these and many smaller shrines tend to be hereditary, and that some shrines, such as Gazargah outside Herat, are still run by lineages of men who claim to be descended from the saint whose tomb is the shrine's raison d'être. Finally, I described some of the amenities shrines possess, such as rooms for retreats (chilla khānas), prayer rooms, facilities for ritual washing, sleeping accommodation, kitchens, cemeteries and gardens. I pointed out that some shrines, both Sunni and Shi'ite, are incorporated within Sufi 'convents' (khānaqāhs) while the shrines at Qom and Mashad are closely linked with the two principal centres of religious education in Iran.

In chapter four I began by asking which kinds of people were most likely to visit shrines. It was clear that women are undoubtedly their most faithful patrons while communal worship in mosques and participation in other central Islamic rituals tends to be the preserve of men. Visiting shrines therefore gives women a religious sphere in which they can for once play a leading role, as well as enabling them to escape from the stifling drudgery of the domestic routine and helping them to cope with the problems which arise from their

markedly lower social status. I went on to examine the organisation of pilgrimage itself, explaining that while it is mostly an individual matter in Iran and Afghanistan, there is still a communal link in some cases. I looked at the ritual of pilgrimage, showing that before modern means of travel made the journey to the shrine so much easier and quicker, pilgrims, at any rate in Iran, left and returned to their local communities with rites of separation and reintegration. In addition, many of the normal boundaries of rank and status appear to have been dissolved among members of a pilgrim caravan. Finally, I pointed out that in spite of Victor Turner's suggestion that pilgrimage shrines are often situated in peripheral places this is not on the whole the case in Iran and Afghanistan.

In chapter five I described the rituals which are most commonly performed at shrines in Iran and Afghanistan, and made some suggestions as to how they might best be understood. To begin with, I emphasised that although most ritual is performed by individual pilgrims for their own private purposes, collective ritual does occur at a few shrines. I drew particular attention to the ritual of 'raising the standard' (janda bālā kardan) which is performed at or soon after New Year's Day at several shrines in northern Afghanistan and helps to assure the prosperity of the community as well as the individual pilgrim during the following year. The ritual which individual visitors to shrines perform for their own personal ends was examined under three headings according to the particular purpose it was

intended to serve. The first of these is encouraging the saint buried at or otherwise associated with a shrine to take up the suppliant's problem and attend to his or her request. In these rituals the idea of homeopathic magic or metaphor appears to be uppermost. Thus the commonest way of persuading a saint to attend to one's problem is to tie a scrap of cloth to some part of his shrine. This 'binds' the saint to pay attention to the request. It also 'binds' the suppliant to fulfil the vow he usually makes at the same time to give something to the shrine if the saint answers his request. Hence the second aspect of shrine ritual is making a gift to or at his shrine, though this can be simply an expression of devotion to the saint rather than being linked with a vow. Distributing food to the poor at a shrine is probably the most popular form of gift-giving as nearly everyone can afford to make some sort of offering of this kind. The third type of ritual revolves around the idea of coming into as close and as prolonged or repeated contact with a shrine as possible. This is because, at least in the context of shrines, baraka appears to work like contagious magic. Hence pilgrims try to touch and kiss the grills which protect the tombs of the more famous saints, while at simpler shrines they touch and gently stroke the saints' grave mounds, rubbing afflicted limbs against them and even sitting and lying upon them.

In chapter six I discussed the reasons why Muslims in Iran and Afghanistan visit shrines. In particular I asked whether it is possible to say that

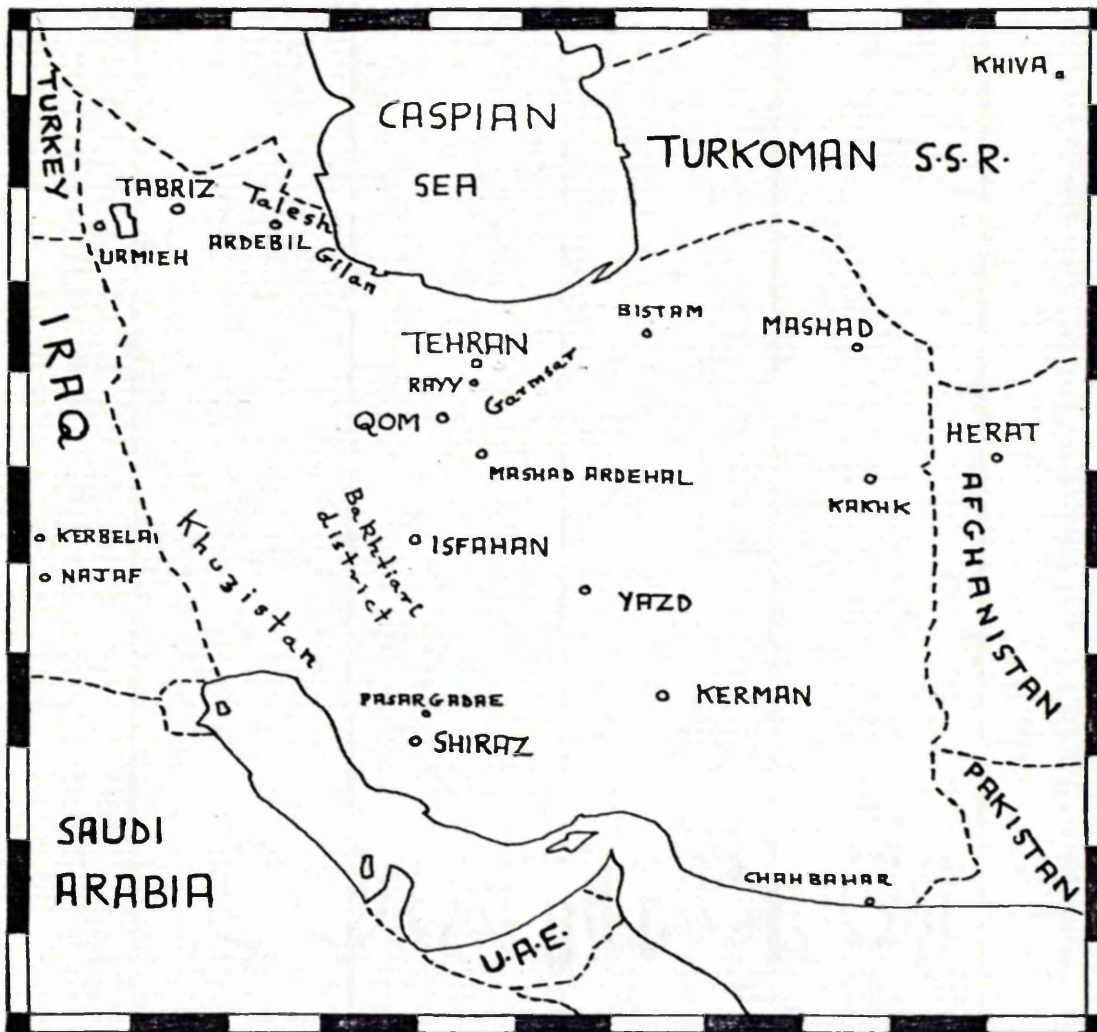
they visit shrines in order to improve their circumstances in this world whereas they pray in mosques in order to improve their chances of reaching the next. The answer was that there is a tendency for people to visit shrines for this-worldly reasons but that especially for women and Sufis, and to some extent for Shi'ite men, other-worldly motives play an important part too. I explained that Shi'ites believe that paradise can only be reached through the intercession of the Imams and imāmzādas and that visiting their shrines is one way of winning this. As well as wanting to win a saint's intercession, many people visit shrines because it makes a change from their usual routine and gives them an opportunity to gather and meet friends in pleasant surroundings. Traditionally, a shrine was also a place of sanctuary which could be used by those who wished to make a political protest against the government as well as by ordinary criminals. Finally, I showed that it is not possible to distinguish this-worldly and other-worldly types of pilgrimage in Iran and Afghanistan corresponding to the 'merit' and 'specific' patterns of pilgrimage Bhardwaj detected among Hindu pilgrims in India.

In the final chapter I explored the wider problem of how the diversity of belief and practice to be found in the Islamic world, of which the Iranian and Afghan shrine and pilgrimage cults provide such striking evidence, may be accommodated within an analytical framework. I began by considering some other approaches. In the first place, I showed that neither Spooner's model

of religions of mosque and shrine, nor Gulick's attempt to apply Redfield's model of Great and Little Traditions in the Islamic context, was very useful because they seriously oversimplified the complexities of the Islamic tradition. Secondly, I examined Ernest Gellner's influential model of a religion of the book and a religion of the shrine in some detail. I explained that this relies on an opposition between, on the one hand, an egalitarian, scripturalist, puritanical and largely urban Islam, which is associated with the religious scholars, the 'ulamā, and, on the other, a rural Islam which is ritualistic, hierarchical, heterodox, associated with Sufism and deeply compromised by local political structures. My objections to this model were firstly that it does not give an accurate picture of urban Islam, and secondly that it greatly exaggerates the differences between it and rural religion. I showed that, for example, both in Morocco and in Iran and Afghanistan, Sufi pīrs or marabouts could be highly regarded for their religious learning. I pointed out that throughout the Islamic world Sufism has played an important role in the towns, being closely associated for example with trade and craft guilds. Many 'ulamā traditionally belonged to Sufi orders, and played important roles at all levels of political organisation, and many still do so.

Lastly, I noted the distinction recently drawn by Eickelmann between what he calls 'particularistic' and 'universalistic' styles of Islam, the former being less explicit and more compromised with a particular social order than the latter. I agreed that in some places

Islam has been and is more closely associated with the political status quo than at others. However, I argued that any model of Islam which operates simply in terms of two contrasting types, whether we call them official and popular, formal and informal or religions of mosque and shrine, is bound to be unsatisfactory. Instead I suggested that we should start with the assumption that in any given part of the Islamic world there are likely to be several different styles of Islamic belief and practice which differ in detail and degree rather than being absolutely opposed to each other. I proposed a number of different criteria in terms of which such styles might be identified and compared, for example, the extent to which they are intercessionary or monotheistic, sober or ecstatic, and self-conscious or implicit. I showed how this approach could be applied by describing a number of different styles of Islam in Iran and Afghanistan. Without claiming that the criteria I used to identify them will necessarily be the most appropriate in every case, I argued that it is practical and useful to look for such styles. By doing so proper account can be taken of the complexity and variety of the Islamic tradition of which the Iranian and Afghan pilgrimage and shrine cults we have been examining are an important feature.



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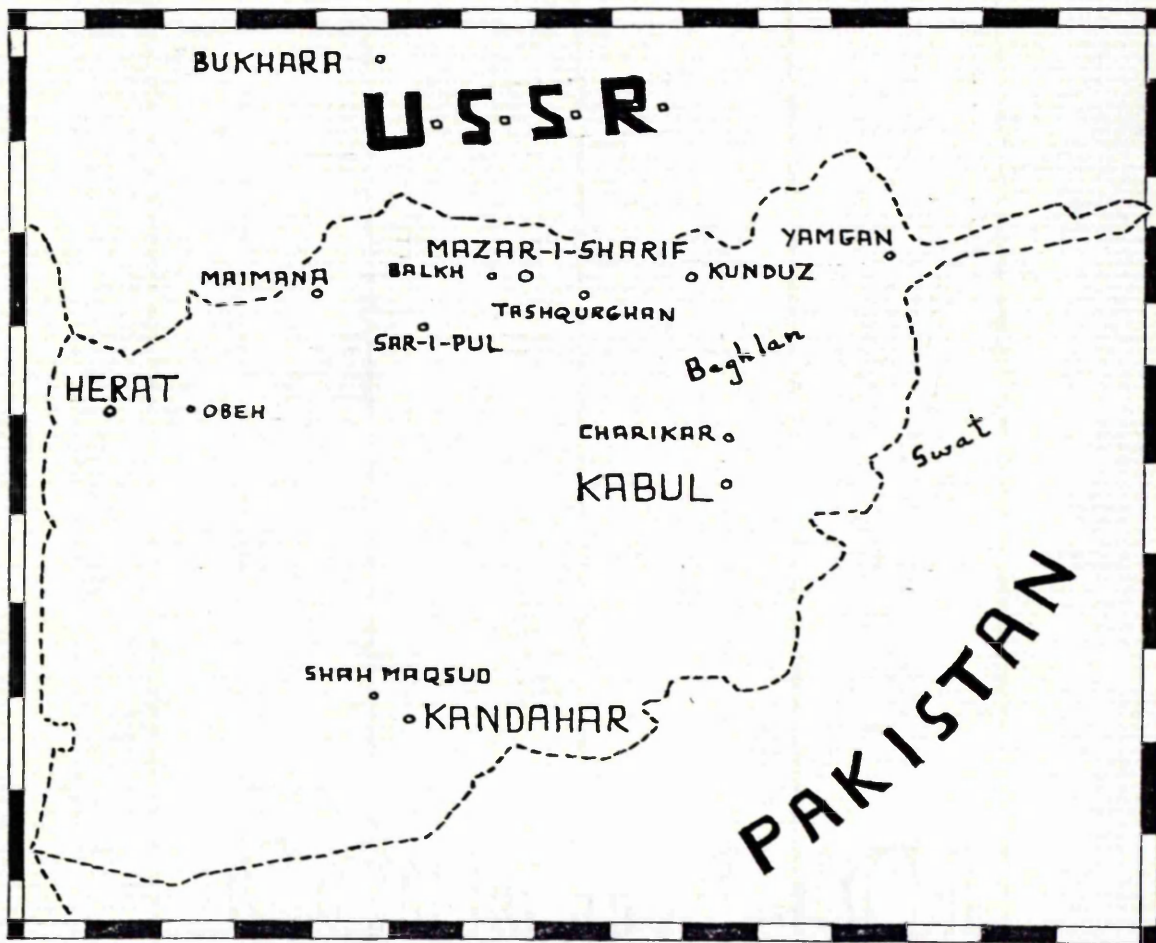
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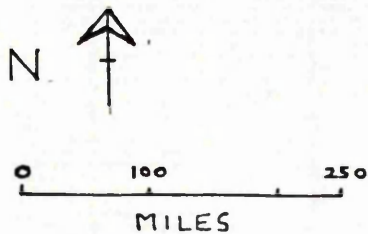
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AFGHANISTAN



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DISTRICTS

BALKH

Baghlan

Glossary of Arabic and Persian terms used in the text:-

ākhūnd - theologian, more commonly preacher, mulla.

‘alam (pl. ‘alām) - standard, banner.

anbiyā (pl. of nabī q.v.) - prophets.

‘atabāt - the tombs of the Shi'ite Imams in southern Iraq.

awliyā‘ (pl. of walī q.v.) - 'saints'.

awqāf (pl. of waqf q.v.) - charitable bequests.

bakhsh - district, administrative division.

baraka(t) - blessings, divine favour in the form of spiritual power.

bast - sanctuary.

bismilla - the invocation "in the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful".

chilla khāna - cell used by Sufis for performing retreats.

dakhīl - seeking quarter, asking for mercy, by extension the rag tied to a shrine to attract a saint's intercession.

dār al-hadīs - house or room in which the Traditions of the Prophet are studied.

dār al-huffāz - house or room used by Koran reciters.

du‘ā - prayer, usually of a personal nature as opposed to namāz, the obligatory daily prayers.

du‘ā nevīs - 'prayer writer', man who makes amulets consisting of phrases copied from the Koran.

fātiha - the opening Sura of the Koran.

ghaws - defender, one who redresses complaints, title of the invisible leader of the hierarchy of Sufi awliyā‘.

Ghazi - a champion, especially against infidels.

hadīs - the Traditions of the Prophet.

hāfiz (pl. huffāz) - one who recites passages from the Koran from memory.

hajj - the greater pilgrimage associated with Mecca.

hāl-i-khush - literally 'happy state of mind', which the Shi'ite pilgrim hopes to achieve when he visits a shrine in which he weeps with true repentance and devotion for the Islam.

hay'at-i-mazhabī - group meeting from some religious purpose.

huffāz (pl. of hāfiz q.v.) - Koran reciters.

Imam - for Sunnis prayer leader, learned man; in the Shi'ite view one of the twelve descendants of the Prophet who inherited his spiritual qualities by virtue of which he should have been leader of the Islamic community.

imāmzāda - descendant of one of the Imams, by extension one of their tombs, shrine.

īshān - term applied to Sufis in central Asia and northern Afghanistan.

janda - standard, especially the decorated pole raised at various shrines in northern Afghanistan at or soon after March 21st, New Year's Day.

janda bālā kardan - the ritual of raising the standard.

Jawan mard-i-qasab - brave or virtuous young butcher, name of a popular folk saint in Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia.

kalima - the Muslim profession of faith.

karāmat (pl. karāmāt) - miracle, miraculous power.

khāja - lord, master, title applied to holy man.

khānaqāh - convent where Sufis gather for instruction by a pir.

khayrāt - charitable deeds.

madrassa - religious college.

maghreb - literally the west, North Africa excluding Egypt.

malang - intoxicated, by extension applied to certain religious mendicants whose behaviour is characteristically wild and unpredictable.

marabout (murābit) - originally an ascetic inhabiting a fortified convent, now generally applied to Sufis in the maghreb.

masjid - mosque.

mawlawī - title of religious scholar or Sufi meaning 'lordship'.

mazār - sepulchre, shrine.

mujāhidīn (pl. of mujāhid) - those who fight for Islam.

mujtahid - an expert in religious law.

Mulla - one who possesses religious knowledge, preacher, 'clergyman'.

muraqaba - spiritual communion with a dead pīr.

murīd (pl. murīdīn) - follower of a Sufi pir.

mut'a - temporary marriage.

mutawallī - custodian or administrator of a pious foundation such as a shrine.

nabī (pl. anbiyā) - prophet.

namāz - the obligatory daily prayers.

naw rūz - March the 21st, New Year's Day according to the Shamsi calendar.

nazar gāh - place hallowed by association with a saint.

nazr - vow.

nazrī - ex-voto.

naqqāra khāna - literally kettledrum house, room in which musicians played at a shrine.

panja - hand made of sheet metal and placed on top of a pole at shrines in Afghanistan.

pīr - Sufi master.

pīrzāda - descendants of a Sufi master.

qabr - grave.

qabūl - acceptable, applied by Shi'ite to their pilgrimages.

qadam gāh - a place regarded as sacred because it possesses the supposed impression of a saint's hand or most commonly his foot.

qālī shūyān - carpet washing, a ritual performed at the shrine of Mashad Ardehal not far from Kashan in central Iran.

qubba - dome, pear or drop-shaped object placed on the roofs of shrines and mosques and on top of poles at shrines in Afghanistan.

qutb - pole, axis, the leader of the invisible hierarchy of Sufi awliyā'.

rawza - recital of the story of Husain's martyrdom at Kerbela.

rawza khān - person who delivers a rawza.

savāb (savāb) - spiritual reward.

sayyid - supposed descendant of the Prophet via Fatima and Ali.

shahīd (pl. shahadā) - one who witnesses to the faith by laying down his life for it.

Sharia - Islamic law.

sīna zanī - chest-beating (with fists) performed by Shi'ites during Muharram.

sufra - table-cloth, an offering made at a shrine consisting of various objects spread out on a cloth.

sujud - prostration.

tarīqa(t) (pl. turuq) - religious way, Sufi order.

tawāf - circumambulation of the Ka'ba in the Great Mosque at Mecca.

ta'ziya - in general the Shi'ite mourning rituals associated with Muharram, in particular in Iran the passion plays based on the martyrdom of Husain performed during that month.

tugh - pole to the top of which a yak's or horse's tail is attached set up at many shrines in central Asia.

'ulamā - religious leaders, scholars of the Sharia.

'umra - the lesser pilgrimage at Mecca, usually performed on the same occasion as the hajj.

vaqf (pl. awqāf) - a gift of land or some other revenue-producing property for some charitable purpose the income from which is exempt from the usual taxation.

walī (pl. awliyā') - friend, helper, person of an advanced level of mystical attainment, 'saint'.

zakāt - alms(giving), one of the five pillars of Islam.

zar - a possession cult originating in Ethiopia.

zanjīr-zanī - beating (the back) with chains, performed by Shi'ites during Muharram.

zāwiya - a Sufi lodge.

zīkr - remembrance (of God), a term for the central Sufi ritual which takes different forms among the different orders.

ziyāra(t) - pilgrimage, also short for ziyārat gāh, shrine.

ziyāra(t) kardan - to perform a pilgrimage, visit a shrine.

ziyāra(t) khān - reciter of prayers prescribed for a particular saint at his shrine.

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